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Khatami, portrait of the week by Bahgory 8

Out of prison

PALESTINIAN police freed the Palestinian American journalist Daoud Kuttab on Tuesday. He had been held without charge for a week, during which he went on hunger strike. His treatment drew wide condemnation from Palestinian and international human rights groups. His brother, lawyer Jonathan Kuttab, told Reuters that PA leader Yasser Arafat had apparently been dissatisfied with his brother's live broadcasts of parliamentary sessions.

Arafat admitted on Tuesday that some members of his cabinet had squandered public funds. He vowed reforms to end corruption during a stormy debate on allocations for President Arafat and his police in the 1997 budget.

Royal rebuke

KING HUSSEIN of Jordan has rebuked Jordan's professional unions for supporting journalists in their protests against reporting restrictions imposed by an amended press law. Hussein asked unions not directly affected by the press law to concentrate on supporting their own members.

Reuters reported that leaders of four professional unions — representing lawyers, engineers, dentists, and writers — have resigned in protest at the press law, and nine others threatened to step down.

Egypt win

EGYPT'S national handball team qualified on Tuesday for the quarterfinals of the World Handball Championship after beating Cuba 24-20 in the 16th round, reports **Inas Mazhar** from Kumamoto, Japan.

The first half ended with Egypt in a ten point lead and though they began the second half strongly, sloppy mistakes allowed the Cubans to score 11 goals in almost as many minutes. Egypt continued to attack, however, and their persistence paid off in the final score. Egypt meets France in the quarterfinals today.

(see p.15)

Final reel

CINEMA artists and fans yesterday flocked to the Church of the Virgin Mary in Garden City to attend the funeral service for veteran director Henry Barakat, who died on Monday. With 110 films to his credit, Barakat's death deprives Egyptian cinema of one of its pioneers. Barakat, who was born in Shubra in 1914, was the director of *Du'aa Al-Karawan* (The Plover's Call), based on the novel by Taha Hussein, and *Al-Haram* (The Forbidden), based on Youssef Idris' work of the same title, two landmarks in the history of Egyptian cinema.

Both films starred Faten Hamama, who also played the lead role in Barakat's *Uridu Hallan* (In Search of a Solution), an acerbic social critique of the personal status laws which revealed the discrimination women faced in the divorce courts and provoked an outcry when first released.

The casts of Barakat's films — including Abdel-Halim Hafez, Leila Murad, Shadia and Amina Rizk — read like a role call of Egyptian cinematic icons. Barakat scored considerable successes on the international festival circuit and last year was the recipient of the State Merit Award.

INSIDE

Facts not foundations

The Sharm El-Sheikh summit saw no breakthrough and has yet to clarify the future of the peace process, despite intensive Egyptian efforts to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians

Egyptian proposals that Israel temporarily halt construction work on the controversial Jebel Abu Ghneim settlement formed the core of meetings between President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu at the Sharm El-Sheikh summit on Tuesday.

Despite the positive note sounded by Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, who said yesterday his government was optimistic about the chances of further progress towards reviving the stalled peace negotiations with the Palestinians, Egyptian officials remained circumspect, with Amr Moussa telling reporters in Cairo yesterday his own "optimism should be based on concrete facts." As yet, he said, such facts have not materialised. And in an interview published by the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, Moussa insisted that "Israeli good will will not suffice to bring about a resumption of negotiations."

"The Palestinians will not accept continued construction of Jewish settlements, especially in Jerusalem," Moussa said. "And though we wish to push the peace process forward what counts are not words but specific steps."

Presidential envoy Osama El-Baz, meanwhile, briefed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Gaza on the outcome of the summit, conveying a letter from Mubarak to the Palestinian president while Netanyahu, for his part, telephoned Jordan's King Hussein overnight to inform him of the results of the talks with Mubarak.

Moussa said Mubarak had explained to Netanyahu "the seriousness of the situation... The idea behind this meeting was to shake the situation and salvage the peace process."

According to informed sources, Egypt proposed that Israel halt construction work on the Jebel Abu Ghneim quarter in East Jerusalem, possibly for six months, to make room for the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The Israelis offered, instead, to start a smaller housing project for Arab residents of East Jerusalem and allow the Palestinian Authority to open an airport and a harbour in Gaza City. But according to a senior Egyptian diplomat the Israeli offer is unlikely to tempt the Palestinians. "To be honest, I don't think the Palestinians can settle for this," he said, adding that Israel's proposals had also failed to garner Egyptian support.

One of Arafat's advisers, Ahmed Tibi, said that "nothing has changed," following the summit. "Netanyahu's cabinet has still not decided to freeze its settlement expansion policy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and this is the heart of the problem," Tibi said.

Arafat's Palestinian Authority broke off peace talks in mid-March after Netanyahu ordered work to begin on the housing project in East Jerusalem. The Palestinians have made their return to the negotiating table conditional on freezing construction.

At a joint news conference following the three-hour summit, both Mubarak and Netanyahu refused to go into the details of their discussions, which they described as a beginning, and said that further consultations were needed.

Asked if future deliberations would include the Palestinians, Mubarak said: "We intend as far as we can to bring the main partner into the meeting but this depends on so many elements. We hope that we could conclude it in the next meeting and then after that, the third element would come." But he also took care to make it "very clear" that Egypt is not prepared to put pressure on the Palestinians, saying it is not in Egypt's "character to exert pressure on any country to [make it] accept what its people cannot accept."



Continued construction of the Jebel Abu Ghneim settlement, left, remains the major obstacle to moving the stalled peace process forward following the Sharm El-Sheikh summit

photo: Khaled Zighari

Mubarak, who met Arafat in Cairo on Monday on the eve of the summit, spoke by telephone with the Palestinian leader during Tuesday's talks with Netanyahu.

The Israeli prime minister declined to say whether he would back down from the construction in Jerusalem, asserting that "at this stage, I prefer to make fewer declarations and more conversations."

The opposition in Israel was dismayed the summit did not lead to a resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The summit was less a "breakthrough" than an attempt to save the peace process from sinking, said Labour leader Shimon Peres. But, he added, "Netanyahu simply does not have the coalition's sanction to make meaningful moves to rescue the peace process."

Other opposition figures were blunter. Labour leadership challenger Yossi Beilin described the summit as a "total failure," while the leftist Meretz bloc tabled a motion of no confidence in the government. "The talks will not be renewed until the settlements are put in deep freeze," said Meretz leader Yossi Sarid.

In Washington, a State Department official told *Al-Ahram Weekly* the Clinton administration was "pleased" that Egypt and Israel sat down for talks, which "shows a real interest in advancing the peace process... It is a good thing to talk and we hope it is a beginning for a good turn," the official said. But for the time being, the official added, neither Middle East envoy Dennis Ross nor Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has any plans to visit the region.

***Nevine Khalil** in Sharm El-Sheikh; **Dina Ezzat** in Cairo; **Graham Usher** in Jerusalem; **Hoda Tewfik** in Washington; Wire dispatches*

In the cause of tolerance

Dina Ezzat spoke to the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar following a visit to Britain in which he sought to debunk Western stereotypes of Islam

During his first twelve months as the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar Mohamed Sayed Tantawi has repeatedly emphasised that Islam is a religion of moderation and mercy, continuing the message promulgated during his earlier tenure as Grand Mufti of the Republic. In his every speech and ruling Tantawi has signalled opposition to strait-jacketed interpretations of Islam, a course that has hardly endeared him to conservative theologians.

During his recent, week-long visit to Britain at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Tantawi spent much of his time promoting Islam as a religion of dialogue in meetings with Christian clergy, Muslim community leaders and members of London-based radical Islamist groups. He also met Prime Minister Tony Blair and Prince Charles — the latter a staunch advocate of increased dialogue between Islam and Christianity.

"I went to Britain to correct the kind of stereotypes that are associated with Islam in Europe," Tantawi told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "I wanted to clear the image of Islam, which is a religion of peace and not, as some like to say or think, of terrorism."

Accorded a red carpet reception, Tantawi still had to answer difficult questions about the politics of Islamist militancy, the alleged persecution of intellectuals and the status of Copts and women in Egypt.

"I affirmed that Islam calls for peaceful dialogue and egalitarianism," Tantawi said. "I asserted that our Coptic brothers have equal citizenship rights and duties, that we oppose arbitrary accusations of apostasy and that, according to the Islamic creed, men are men and women are women. Both are equal in terms of the origin of their creation, their duties and their right to dignity."

Tantawi was impressed by what he described as "very constructive conversations" on all these matters.

Given the tendency of the Western media to project Islam as a religion that negates all other beliefs and encourages violence, Tantawi believes that his visit came as a timely reminder that this is not the case. And he agreed with the Archbishop of Canterbury to hold regular meetings in both Egypt and England to follow up on the visit. "The Archbishop will be visiting Egypt in December," Tantawi said.

As the head of the leading Sunni institution in the Islamic world, Tantawi firmly believes in the necessity of engaging in dialogue with anyone who sees Islam in a negative light.

"I have no objections to visiting France [where the Muslim community is under pressure] or any other country where my presence might help clear up misunderstandings," he said. Tantawi believes that enhancing the image of Islam in the West can only have a positive impact on the lives of Muslims living there. Nor is he opposed to speaking with radical Islamist groups abroad. Although saddened by what he views as a distorted interpretation of religion and by accusations that he has compromised on some basic tenets, Tantawi sees dialogue as the only path forward. "I have to be patient with these people," he said.

Tantawi is no stranger to controversy. His ruling allowing Muslims to deal with Western-style banks angered conservative theologians, and he has come under fire for insisting that female genital mutilation is not an Islamic obligation and that women have the right to abortion if pregnancy threatens their lives. His recent declaration supporting organ transplants from the dead also antagonised conservative theologians.

"I don't issue a religious ruling off the top of my head," Tantawi says. "I go through lengthy and detailed studies first. And when I do, I don't go back on what I said."

'To dream of a better future'

Flushed with his success at Cannes, Youssef Chahine is unlikely to be diverted from the course he has charted throughout almost half a century in film, despite the exhortations of his critics

A scene near the end of Youssef Chahine's *Al-Massir* (Destiny) shows Ibn Rushd (Nur El-Sherif) standing before a huge bonfire on which his life's work is being burned by order of a sultan egged on by a bigoted and power hungry religious establishment.

Ibn Rushd, holding a volume in his hands, turns his back to the fire and throws what may be the last of his works still in Andalusia into the flames. The image is one of defiance rather than defeat — already Ibn Rushd's disciples have smuggled copies of his books abroad.

Nur El-Sherif's face takes on a Chahine-like aspect — not a difficult task for an actor who perfected playing the director in Chahine's autobiographical film *Haduta Masriya* (Egyptian Tale). Consigning his book to the fire, Ibn Rushd does not speak but from the close-up of his face the audience is left in no doubt that the unspoken words would be something like "do your utmost, you can't break me." And for those among the audience more familiar with Chahine, the unspoken dialogue is accompanied by a typically *Alexandrian snort*.

Al-Massir, the most recent film in a corpus of work that earned Chahine the Life Achievement Award at last week's 50th Cannes Film Festival, is proof enough that the rebellious director has refused to be cowed by the outcry that accompanied his earlier film, *Al-Muhagir* (The Emigrant). Inspired by the biblical story of Joseph, whom Islam reveres as a prophet, the release of *Al-Muhagir* provided Islamist fundamentalists with one more opportunity to flex their ideological muscles, this time in the courts, to which increasing recourse is being made in attempts to ban works of art or scholarship.

Chahine insists, however, that *Al-Massir* was not conceived as a riposte to his persecutors. "I don't like to provoke. I like to trigger thought," he says, insisting that fanaticism and intolerance, whether on religious, racial or ethnic grounds, is a world-wide phenomenon which we have to understand. "What is happening to the world?" asks the director whose work for almost half a century has been characterised by its humanist bias.

As for *Al-Muhagir* — "of course, it was not a pleasant experience to be dragged through the courts. It was not a nice feeling doubting the justice of my own country," admits Chahine. He did, however, insist on stopping the armed guards a few days after they had been assigned to him by the Interior Ministry to protect him against possible attempts on his life.

"It was like walking in a prison cell," he recalls. "I asked that they be withdrawn, and immediately went to El-Hussein. The people are my protection." Unpleasant as it may have been, the experience, Chahine insists, did not trigger a desire to hit back, but rather provided "ideas for dramatisation."

Chahine vehemently rejects being categorised as an opponent of the Islamists. "What about the state? I am also an opponent of the state," he barks. To challenge authoritarianism in all its forms is, in his view, the true role of an artist and an intellectual. "We are besieged," he argues, "by three exclusionist authoritarianisms: those who would monopolise state power, those who would monopolise God, and those who would monopolise knowledge." His place in all this? "I am not interested in power, or the struggle over power. My job is to dream of a better future."

Understanding the phenomenon of religious fanaticism remains, however, a major concern of Chahine's and a dominant theme in *Al-Massir*.

"There are many factors. Economic hardship is one factor, a very powerful one, but it is not the only explanation." For Chahine, "the loss of dignity" that results from exclusion, whether economic, political, social or cultural, is possibly the most significant force behind fanaticism.

"I struggle for four years in university, I get a degree, and you tell me you have no place for me. This is a denial of my dignity. Work is a source of dignity." So is the ability to establish a family, to have a home, to be able to provide for your children. "To be excluded from determining the policies of your country, for your views, needs, and hopes to be ignored and dismissed as irrelevant, all this implies a loss of dignity," Chahine argues.

"The others [the Islamists] offer a way out, however false. They make you an *Emir*, who can lord it over others, telling them what is right and what is wrong. But what are we offering? Exclusion, lack of dignity, despair," says Chahine.

And this, in the end, is what Chahine tries to express in *Al-Massir*. Islamists, however, are not the only potential source of attacks against the film. Already a university professor and self-proclaimed authority on Ibn Rushd has initiated legal proceedings against Chahine for failing to consult him on the film. The historical authenticity of the film has been questioned. But Chahine, as always, scoffs at those who would impose "a monopoly on history and knowledge".

He insists he has done extensive research into *Ibn Rushd* and his period — "why are his references any better than mine. Maybe his references are poor." But it is not the past that it is at stake, but the present, argues Chahine. "Was *Hamlet* a historical work, was Miller's *Crucible*?"

Chahine says his film set out to capture "the spirit" of Ibn Rushd's age, and more importantly, to comment on ours. "This is drama. What do they want me to do, a documentary, an impossible documentary?"

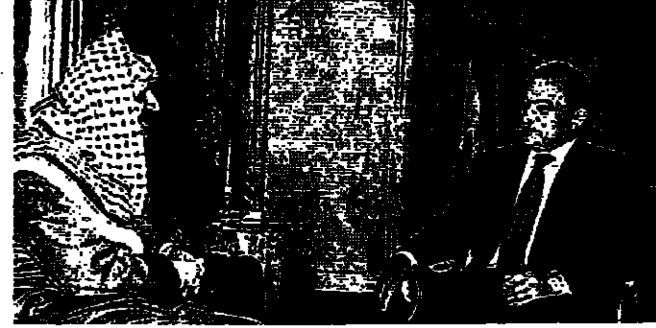
Friends and fans give Chahine a hero's welcome

photo: Thomas Hartwell

*Interview by **Hani Shukrallah** and **Hani Mustafa***

Al-Ahram Weekly







In the days preceding his Sharm El-Sheikh summit with Binyamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, Mubarak met with King Hussein (left), Arafat (centre) and Syrian prime minister, Mahmoud Al-Zhobi (right)

Pre-summit diplomatic flurry

Ahead of Tuesday's summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, President Mubarak held separate consultations with Yasser Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein. Nevine Khalil reports

Intensive Egyptian diplomatic efforts climaxed this week in top-level talks between President Hosni Mubarak and other leaders involved in the peace process. Mubarak met Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Cairo last Monday, and held talks with Jordan's King Hussein two days earlier in the Jordanian Red Sea resort of Aqaba. Laying the groundwork for Tuesday's summit with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Sharm El-Sheikh, Mubarak also dispatched his political adviser, Osama El-Baz, to Israel twice and spoke to Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad by telephone.

Mubarak met with Arafat for two and a half hours. The two leaders were briefed by El-Baz on the outcome of his visits to Israel, including meetings with Netanyahu and his top aides.

"The Israeli prime minister wants to present President Mubarak with ideas which have not been made public so far," Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said.

He said Egypt was not in a position to accept or reject these ideas, but it was up to the Palestinians to decide.

Asked who might "buckle under" first, Moussa said, "The question is not who will change his mind, but how to save peace." He added, "Peace is incompatible with *fait accomplis* and the [Jewish] settlement of the territories."

Netanyahu "could not hold talks with President Mubarak if he took the position of absolute rejection," Moussa said. Asked if there was trust between Mubarak and the Israeli prime minister, Moussa replied, "Netanyahu is the prime minister of Israel and he is the person we should talk to... We hope that matters will be activated, if agreement is reached on the right start."

Palestinian-Israeli peace talks ground to a halt when Israel began construction of a Jewish quarter in Arab East Jerusalem in March. The Palestinians have made their return to the negotiating table conditional on a halt of Israel's expansionist policy.

"The formula for resuming the negotiations is clear and is acceptable to all countries of the world and the parties except Mr Netanyahu, who believes that he has a divine duty to resume settlement-building activity," said Arafat's adviser, Marwan Kanafani.

US envoy Dennis Ross made two shuttle trips to the region, but failed to bridge the gap between the Palestinian and Israeli positions. "The US must understand that the Palestinians will not put up with mistakes but only with correct facts," Arafat said.

The Palestinians accused Ross of pro-Israeli bias and called for higher-level US intervention. But Washington was unresponsive. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said last weekend that it was up to the Israelis and Palestinians to show the political will to end the impasse themselves.

Nevertheless, Mubarak and King Hussein both affirmed the importance of the US role in peacemaking at the end of their talks in Aqaba last Saturday, during which Arafat was consulted by telephone. In three hours of discussions, the two leaders had agreed that the peace process needed to be reactivated, Mubarak told a joint news conference. The consequences of further delay, he said, "would not be good at all."

Mubarak appeared to have secured Jordan's support for a plan to revive the negotiations, but neither leader disclosed details. The Jordanian monarch said his country supported the Egyptian initiative. "We bless all the efforts our Egyptian brothers have made and support them," Hussein said.

Mubarak said Egypt had not laid down conditions for reviving the stalled peace process. El-Baz's discussions in Israel were "without preconditions... We have not talked about conditions, we are talking about how to solve the present crisis."

As Mubarak and Hussein met, reports suggested that Egypt was floating a five-point plan to persuade the Palestinians and Israelis to return to the negotiating table. According to these reports, Egypt has proposed a temporary halt of settlement activities in Jerusalem and the West Bank, the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli security coordination and a stepped-up Palestinian effort to combat anti-Israeli terrorist attacks. Egypt has also reportedly suggested an immediate resumption of negotiations on a second Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank's rural areas and the opening of final status negotiations to determine the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the borders of the Palestinian 'entity'.

Egyptian officials played down the reports. "There hasn't been an 'initiative' in the full sense of the word," Moussa said. "There are discussions on the current crisis and the ideas are related to settlements and implementing agreements."

Mubarak said it was too early to talk of an Egyptian initiative to reactivate the Palestinian track negotiations. "We still cannot talk about initiatives until we see the Israeli side — what ideas they have — and then examine them and present them to the Palestinian side," he said.

Egypt and Syria to boost cooperation

A joint Egyptian-Syrian committee decided to establish a free trade zone and further promote political and economic cooperation between the two countries, reports Shaden Shehab

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and his Syrian counterpart Mahmoud Al-Zohbi co-chaired a meeting of a joint Egyptian-Syrian committee on Monday, which resulted in the signing of five agreements cementing the already close cooperation between the two countries.

The agreements covered the establishment of a free trade zone, social insurance, encouraging investments, the creation of a holding company for bilateral projects and a joint marketing company. A recommendation to establish an Egyptian-Syrian chamber of commerce was also passed.

Zohbi told reporters that his talks with Ganzouri underlined the importance of establishing a common Arab market. The two prime ministers said it was also important to remove trade barriers between the two countries, so that trade exchange could rise from its current $92 million to $200 million annually by the year 2000.

He recalled Egypt and Syria's union as the United Arab Republic between 1958 and 1961, an event, he said, which was "implanted in the minds of all Egyptians and Syrians."

Zohbi also held talks with President Hosni Mubarak on the eve of Tuesday's summit between Mubarak and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu at Sharm El-Sheikh.

Speaking to reporters after the 30-minute meeting with Mubarak, Zohbi said he and the president had "reviewed questions of mutual interest...and the current moves to boost Arab action in the face of the challenges which we all face." Asked about the suspended Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations, Zohbi replied: "Anyone who listens to the Israeli pronouncements will be certain that there is nothing new at present in the peace process."

Referring to the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq, Zohbi commented: "Like all Arab states, we are against violating the sovereignty of a sister Arab country." He added that "this has always been Syria's position. In the past, as now, we are on the side of the Iraqi people." Zohbi was responding to a reporter's question about whether a reported thaw in Syrian-Iraqi relations had resulted from common fears of a Turkish-Israeli military alliance.

Asked about Iraq's call for a meeting of Arab foreign ministers to discuss the Turkish incursion, Zohbi said: "The idea has not crystallised yet."

A seven-member trade delegation from Syria visited Iraq two weeks ago in the first such mission for almost two decades, and an Iraqi economic delegation is expected to visit Syria soon.

Cold peace gets colder

There was a distinct chill in the air as President Mubarak and Binyamin Netanyahu met in Sharm El-Sheikh. Dina Ezzat describes the setting against which the Egyptian-Israeli summit took place

When the late President Anwar El-Sadat told parliament in 1977 that he was prepared to visit Jerusalem and call for peace from the podium of the Israeli Knesset, he probably did not think that 20 years later Egyptian-Israeli relations would be as cool as they are today.

Egyptian officials admit that political relations with Israel fall below the standard that might have been expected at this stage. They agree that relations are tense. According to Nabil Fahmi, political adviser to the minister of foreign affairs, "There is a difference between having the basis for bilateral relations and the rate of development of these relations. The basis is there but the rate of development is not up to the expectations we had when we signed the peace treaty with Israel." He added: "We expected more progress towards a comprehensive settlement which would have allowed for a better development of our bilateral relations."

Since the signing of the peace treaty between the two countries in 1979, bilateral relations have had their ups and downs. But, analysts and diplomats agree, the downs have been far more frequent.

While both countries seemed to have a common interest in working towards mutual economic gains, this has not stopped their many political differences that have sometimes turned into verbal confrontations.

The two principal bones of contention have been the regional power play and the peace process, diplomatic sources said.

Israel and Egypt have exchanged covert and overt accusations of seeking to monopolise economic and political power in the region. According to Emad Gad, managing editor of *Israeli Digest*, the monthly bulletin issued by Al-Ahram's Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, this hostile spirit is very clear in the articles that appear in the press of both countries.

After Egypt's return to the Arab fold, under President Hosni Mubarak, Cairo has been intent on maintaining a certain degree of political leverage in the region. This is something that Israel has never seemed to tolerate because it undermined its chances of clinching "comfortable" peace deals with other Arab states. It also deprived Israel of the opportunity of courting the oil-rich Gulf states with the aim of cementing economic ties.

Israel's negative reaction to the 1996 Cairo Arab summit was indicative of this attitude, analysts argue. While the summit was in progress, Israel chose to start a diplomatic crisis with Egypt over allegations that Cairo had received a shipment of Scud missiles from North Korea that threatened Israeli security. Egypt's response was forceful: Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said that if Israel wanted to speak about missiles and anti-missile devices, it should be prepared to open the file on its nuclear arsenal, which it keeps closed to international inspection.

The armaments file is only one of many controversies that keep popping up whenever the two countries are involved in a crisis over peacemaking and power brokerage in the region. Others include nationalised Jewish property in Egypt, illegal Egyptian labour in Israel, spies arrested by both sides and revelations that the Israeli army had deliberately killed Egyptian prisoners of war during the '56 and '67 wars.

Foreign Ministry sources concede that since Binyamin Netanyahu came to power, relations between the two countries have been going through a rough time as a result of his anti-Oslo attitude and expansionist policies. Even trade and the exchange of agricultural expertise, which have been the strongest points of bilateral relations, have slowed down.

It is true, said Foreign Ministry adviser Fahmi, that whenever progress is being made in the peace process, bilateral relations also make progress. The only time Egypt recalled its Tel Aviv ambassador for consultations was at the time of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

The link between the climate of bilateral relations and the future of the peace process is simple. "You cannot isolate progress achieved in bilateral relations from the peace process," Fahmi asserted.

Whenever peacemaking has faced an impasse, Israel has accused Egypt of playing an obstructionist role. Such accusations are shrugged off by Cairo on the grounds that it not only has commitments under the peace treaty with Israel but also to its Arab 'brothers'.

Shortly before Tuesday's summit between Mubarak and Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister suggested that Egypt should encourage the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table. "We are not going to hand over the Palestinians to Israel on a silver platter," responded Moussa.

Egyptians argue that for Israel to enjoy the full harvest of peace, it will have to return all usurped Arab rights. Israelis complain that their peace with Egypt has been cold because the Egyptian government does not encourage its citizens to foster stronger relations. They point out that after 16 years in office, Mubarak has not paid a single visit to Israel — apart from attending the funeral of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Mubarak has repeatedly stated that he cannot force Egyptians to establish warm relations with the Israelis. If Israel wants warmer relations, he insists, it should work harder for peace. Without this, he is not going to visit Tel Aviv.

Iraq back to the fold?

Egypt is making a bid to bring Iraq back into the Arab fold, not only to serve its own political and economic interests, but also to revive Arab solidarity. Dina Ezzat explores developments

Egypt urged the United Nations last week to extend the food-for-oil deal, under which Iraq was allowed to export $2 billion worth of oil and use the proceeds for buying urgently needed food and medicine for its population. Iraqis have been suffering for the past six years from sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council following Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under the food-for-oil deal, Egypt has been able to sell Iraq a few million pounds worth of Egyptian products, mainly food and medicine. An extension would mean more Egyptian exports to Iraq.

Egypt's call for the extension followed statements by Nabil El-Arabi, Egypt's ambassador to the UN, that it would be unfair to further delay the lifting of the sanctions, which forced Baghdad to dismantle the larger part of its military arsenal and caused the death of two million people as a result of malnutrition and the shortage of medicines.

"This is one of several gestures made by Egypt in Iraq's direction recently," said a diplomat, who asked that his name be withheld.

Recently, Egypt reportedly refused to provide the United Nations arms inspection mission in Iraq with information about its contribution to the building of the Iraqi military arsenal during the late 1980s. Egypt's "lack of cooperation", sources say, was officially reported by the mission to the UN.

"Egypt has no interest now in providing information on its previous military relations with Iraq," said one Foreign Ministry source.

Diplomatic representation between Iraq and Egypt, which fought the Iraqi army in the Kuwait liberation war as part of a US-led military coalition, had been downgraded to interest sections attached to the embassies of other countries. However, diplomatic sources say that Cairo is becoming increasingly aware that to help Iraq emerge from its regional isolation would serve Cairo's "strategic, political and economic interests." The economic gains are obvious: Iraq is a traditional market for Egyptian labour. The promotion of bilateral trade and joint ventures between Cairo and Baghdad are bound to help the growth of the Egyptian economy.

During the past 18 months, trade relations have been growing slowly but surely. Leading Egyptian and Iraqi industrialists have exchanged visits.

The Egyptian overtures, one diplomatic source said, "are not only about Egypt's interests. They also concern the region's future." From a political perspective, bringing Iraq back into the Arab fold would mean presenting a united Arab front in dealings with world nations, particularly in view of anti-Arab trends now at work in the region.

Last week, following a Turkish incursion into northern Iraq, which drew Egyptian condemnation, Syria also made moves in the direction of a rapprochement with Iraq following a rift lasting for nearly 20 years. The Syrian moves are bound to prove encouraging to Egypt.

Moreover, one source said, leaving Iraq on its own would encourage the "expansionist" attitude of Turkey as well as Western notions of dividing Iraq into three entities — Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'ites.

Cairo reacted with alarm to the Turkish incursion, which began on 14 May. "It is important that Iraq's sovereignty over its territories is respected," said Foreign Minister Amr Moussa. "The Turkish incursion cannot be condoned."

Moussa also stressed Cairo's "deep concern" as well as "rejection" of the Turkish incursion.

A Foreign Ministry official suggested that the incursion "might be Ankara's rehearsal for a long-term invasion of Iraq, with American blessing." Another source suggested that Turkey's aim could be the establishment of a security belt in northern Iraq. "This is a situation that nobody would accept," Moussa said.

In making the incursion, Turkey invoked the right of "hot pursuit" against rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party.

One source argued that "strategically, Cairo cannot afford to be on bad terms with Iraq and Sudan at the same time, for long periods because this would undermine Cairo's influence as the leading state of the Arab world." Analysts said that statements made by senior officials underlined Cairo's belief that re-integrating Iraq into the Arab world is becoming a "pressing matter."

In recent talks with leaders of the Arab Gulf states, high Egyptian officials have reportedly asserted the need to save the Iraqi people from the misery of poverty and deprivation in which they have been living for the past six years. The reaction of the Gulf states was mixed. "Qatar, for example, showed a better response than Kuwait," a source said.

In a recent interview with Abu Dhabi television, President Hosni Mubarak expressed "hope that relations will be restored between Iraq and all of the Arab states." But he conceded that this was unlikely to happen without the consent of the concerned Arab states and international powers.

"We are talking about resolutions of the Security Council," he said. "We are doing all that we can, but we are not a power that can impose anything on anyone... We can only talk about alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people."

Egypt obviously cannot afford to improve relations with Iraq at the expense of its traditionally strong ties with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which seem to continue to suffer from a Saddam Hussein phobia.

When participating in conferences in which the three Gulf countries are represented, Egyptian diplomats are instructed to follow this golden rule: take a middle course that does not antagonise the Iraqis and yet shows solidarity with the Kuwaitis and Saudi Arabians.

A Foreign Ministry official said that before Iraq is taken back into the Arab fold, it will have to fulfil all its international obligations, particularly with regard to the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners held by Baghdad since the war.

Moreover, Egypt has to ponder carefully the wisdom of introducing a fresh strain in its relations with the United States by showing support for the Iraqis. Washington opposes a quick lifting of the sanctions clamped against Baghdad.

"Obviously, there is no such thing as sanctions imposed forever," Moussa maintained. "But there are certain concerns, particularly on the part of the Gulf states... The question has been raised, however, for how long can the Iraqi people hold on and put up with this situation?"

Moussa affirmed: "Iraq, as an Arab country, is a member of the Arab fold; there is no question about that." And, despite "differences," Iraq remains "a member of the Arab family; this does not change," he said.

Art in retreat

The appearance of a literary magazine was delayed because it included nude paintings by artist Mahmoud Said. As Rania Khallaf reports, the paintings will be removed from the next issue



Ibda'a (Creativity), a monthly magazine published by the General Egyptian Book Organisation, had to postpone the publication of its April issue after objections were raised to the inclusion of nude paintings by the pioneer artist Mahmoud Said, to mark the centenary of the artist's birth on 8 April 1897. Said, described by some as the artist who unveiled Egyptian women, died on his birthday in 1964.

Other celebrations of Said's centenary included a two-day seminar, organised by the Supreme Council of Culture, on the man and his work (19-20 May), and an exhibition of his paintings at the Museum of Modern Egyptian Art.

The May issue of *Ibda'a* was also to have included a special supplement on "the vision of the human body in thought, art and philosophy." Objections were also raised to this.

"The first objection came from one of the workers at the printing press, who found Said's pictures obscene," said the magazine's editor, Ahmed Abdel-Motei Hegazi, a renowned poet, who was travelling in Europe when the controversy erupted.

Samir Sarhan, head of the General Book Organisation, ordered a halt to work on the issue until Hegazi's return. "When I came back, I was surprised to see that some other officials and editors supported the idea of replacing Mahmoud Said's nude paintings with other pictures," Hegazi told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Some officials feared that the publication of the nude pictures might cause problems to Sarhan, who had already come under fire from some conservative writers for publishing *Al-Saqqar*, a novel by Samir Gharib, because it dealt with religious issues.

Hegazi promised readers that the study of Said's works would appear in the June issue, but without the nude paintings. The supplement on the human body will appear in September, after it is scrutinised and "offending" paragraphs removed, he said.

"I had to make concessions by postponing the supplement and removing the nude pictures, so that the magazine can continue publication," he said. "It is very difficult to resist the conservative current, which is deeply rooted in society and even in state organisations."

Said was born into an aristocratic family and was an uncle of Queen Farida, the first wife of ex-King Farouk. He studied law in Paris but gave it up for art in 1927. Although he produced landscapes and still lives, it is primarily as a portraitist that Said is celebrated. He was exceptionally skilled at capturing expression, mannerisms and personality, and much of his appeal is due to the fact that, despite his aristocratic background, he chose the poor as the subject of his work.

Makram Henein, an artist and critic who has recently published a comprehensive study of Said's work, said that his nude paintings were an attempt to deal realistically with sexual subjects.

He was intrigued by the combination of coquettishness and coyness found in the *baladi* women of the poor districts of Alexandria.

"His famous painting 'Girls of Alexandria' depicted *baladi* girls in tight-fitting *galabiyas*, symbolising their wish to break loose from social restrictions. The paintings also reflected his own inner conflicts," Henein said.

Henein was critical of the conservative trend which, he argued, has not only targeted Said, but affected the artistic life of the nation as a whole.

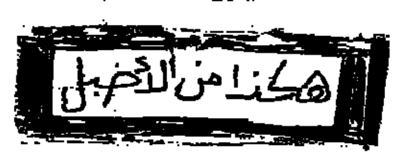
"The conservative trend which has taken hold of Egypt during the past two decades has forced the School of Fine Arts to prohibit students from using nude models. As a result, students are unable to imagine the human body and their professional standard has been undermined," he said.

Said's critics include Sheikh Youssef El-Badri, a preacher and former member of parliament. He considers Said's paintings "a trivial imitation of God's creation." Islam, he said, prohibits the representation of the human body in paintings and artists should abide by morals and ethics. Said's nude paintings would only lead to corruption, he added.

"If we surrender to these reactionary forces, art will lose its identity," responded Henein.

Ibda'a editor Hegazi added: "It is not the responsibility of *Ibda'a* to resist such reactionary forces alone. We should not have to carry this burden alone. All sectors of society should cooperate to eliminate this trend. Otherwise, the margin of freedom that we have will gradually diminish."

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**



Local industries slam foreign dumping

The drastic increase in foreign dumping on the local markets was the subject of debates in the People's Assembly and the Shura Council. **Gamal Essam El-Din** attended

The global drive to lift trade barriers leaves the Egyptian economy susceptible to the dumping of foreign goods, argued a number of MPs during several recent debates in the People's Assembly and the Shura Council's Industrial Committee. The debates were part of parliamentary sessions convened at the behest of members of the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), and attended by several industrial investors, economists, government officials and MPs.

The dumping of foreign goods on the Egyptian market as a result of the lifting of trade barriers, argued a parliamentary report that came out of the discussions, has negatively affected Egyptian industries producing similar products. Over the last six months alone, roughly LE10 billion in illegally dumped or smuggled goods have found their way into the Egyptian market. The 71-page report also argued that dumping not only decreases the price of imported goods in comparison to their locally-produced counterparts, but also undermines the competitiveness of local companies in various strategic industries.

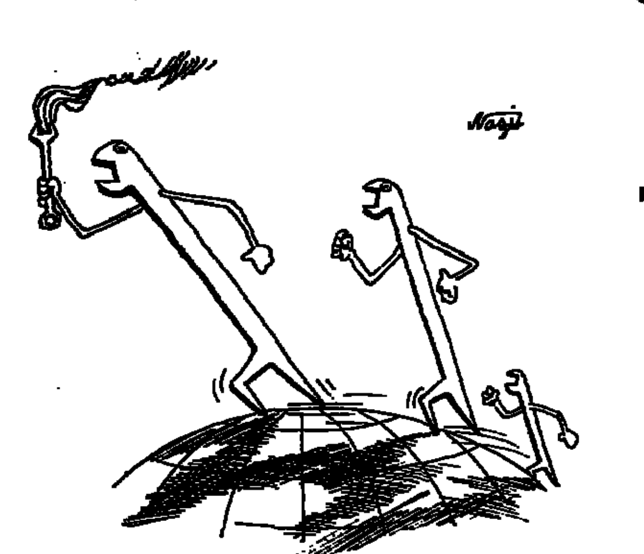
A case in point discussed was the sugar industry in Egypt. In recent Shura Council Industrial Committee debates, Ahmed Guweily, the minister of supply and trade, found himself at loggerheads with representatives of local sugar producers and manufacturers over the impact of dumping on local production.

Abdel-Aal Kholeif, chairman of the Sugar and Integrated Industries Company (SIIC), explained that from July 1996, the Egyptian sugar market has fallen victim to heavy foreign dumping.

"Over the last year, the local market was inundated with as much as 470,000 tons of cheap sugar imported from the EU, Brazil and Cuba," said Kholeif. While this imported sugar is sold in Egypt at the rock-bottom price of LE1,300 per ton, its value can reach LE2,700 per ton in the EU, he added. When compared to the price of locally-produced sugar, the conflict is clear. "In Egypt, the cost of locally-refined sugar is LE1,500 per ton," said Kholeif. Similarly, on the retail market, imported sugar sells for LE1.50 per kilo while Egyptian sugar retails for LE1.80 per kilo.

Practices such as these, pointed out Kholeif, not only are a violation of GATT, but also placed the SIIC in dire financial straits. The company's failure to market most of its 950,000 tons-per-year production has forced it to borrow heavily from commercial banks in order to pay farmers the full price of the sugar cane delivered to it. He added that the Ministry of Supply owes SIIC roughly LE1.17 billion — a figure reflecting the value of the tonnage of refined sugar it received for sale on the retail market.

However, ministry officials disagree with this assessment, arguing that the plunge in sugar prices on the local market is a result of a slump in international sugar prices, rather than dumping. Currently, Egypt's annual sugar production stands at around 1.3 million tons, noted Guweily. To bridge this gap between production and consumption, the SIIC itself has imported around 200,000 tons of raw sugar, he continued. The private sector, however, has imported only 105,000 tons of sugar.



Vehemently objecting to Guweily's arguments were FEI and Shura Council Industrial Committee head, Mohamed Farid Khamis and Adel El-Shahawy, chairman of the Food Industries Holding Company, the SIIC's parent company. Both men maintained that the Ministry of Supply and Trade's laxity with regard to investigating dumping practices and its failure to draft an anti-dumping law are largely responsible for the problems confronting the sugar industry. As a measure to combat this problem, they recommended that the importing of refined sugar be either banned for six months or be subjected to high tariffs.

"A failure to adopt these moves would put in jeopardy the LE2.7 billion in investments earmarked for several sugar-dependent industries, such as alcohol, yeast, wood and wood pulp," said El-Shahawy.

Also claiming foul play were representatives of the iron and steel industry. Over the last three years, said the parliamentary report, the increase in the illegal imports of low-cost, reinforced steel climbed from 22 per cent in 1995 to 51 per cent by early 1997. Approximately LE1.312 billion in dumped, imported steel, found its way into the Egyptian market this year, it stated.

"Last year, Egypt fell victim to roughly 1.1 million tons of reinforced steel, mainly arriving from Russia, the Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and Libya," said the report.

According to Amin Hammad, an MP and a private contractor, a group of private importers have recently begun selling low-cost, imported steel at the reduced price of LE710 per ton at the port of Alexandria. The value of locally-produced reinforced steel, however, is LE1,000 per ton on the local market.

A third sector — the electronics industry — has also been affected by dumping practices. The PA's Industrial Committee indicated that although Egypt has recently managed to locally manufacture roughly 50 per cent of components in various electronic products, such as radios, TV sets and video cassette recorders (VCRs), this fledgling industry has also suffered extensively from a wave of dumping emanating from South East Asia.

For example, said the PA's report, over the last eight months, more than 100,000 video sets were dumped at very low prices on the local market. "This has led to a LE230 million loss sustained by private and public sector electronics manufacturers, and has also forced a number of companies to shut down their VCR production lines."

Help, however, already seems to be on the way — at least with regard to the SIIC's ailing balance sheet. The government this month announced that a 40 per cent stake in the SIIC is to be offered for sale on the stock exchange. A comparable offer will be made for shares in the Egyptian Iron and Steel Company, another corporation that has fallen under hard times as a result of dumping. The two share offerings, worth a total of LE994 million, are aimed at restructuring the financial and technical conditions of these two companies.

AMAI in Egypt

THE AMERICAN Management Association International (AMAI), a non-profit organisation offering management development services to both private and public sector enterprises, this week opened its regional office in Egypt.

"What we provide is an international perspective for local managers through which they are able to compete in the global economy," said John Dor, the managing director of Management Centre Europe (MCE), the AMAI's European arm. The MCE, which has been active in the Middle East since 1979, also held its annual meeting, for the first time, in Cairo this week. The services provided by the AMAI are in the form of seminars, conferences and business forums for all levels of management.

Dor said that the association's role in Egypt would be to "service the needs of local companies wanting global exposure, as well as international companies wanting to contribute to Egypt's growth and economic viability as a regional leader." To this end, the AMAI can be instrumental in helping Egypt overcome what Dor described as managerial problems, such as lack of quality standards and the problems associated with the rapid implementation of the privatisation process. He added, however, that Egypt "enjoys a large number of qualified, dynamic managers — especially in the private sector — who are capable of coping with rapid change."

Researching fish and water

THE INTERNATIONAL Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM), supported and funded in part by the World Bank, was inaugurated last week in El-Sharqiya Governorate. ICLARM is to conduct research on sustainable management for water resources and policies related to fish resources.

The new centre is one of 16 research centres worldwide affiliated to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), which is also funded by the World Bank, along with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), reports Mona El-Fiqi. ICLARM's inaugural meeting was held during the mid-term session of CGIAR, which was held in Egypt for the first time, and was attended by some 200 participants from 40 countries.

CGIAR's chairman, Ismail Serageddin, who is also vice president of the World Bank, said that CGIAR, established in 1971, aims at supporting worldwide agricultural research in order to increase the agricultural production of developing countries and, therefore, improve their economic and social conditions.

Serageddin explained that the new ICLARM centre, which is located in the Egyptian town of El-Abasa, will help highlight to CGIAR the most important target areas and issues that will then be included in the group research programme over the next few years.

Egypt, which joined CGIAR in 1994, was the first Arab country to join this organisation. Syria followed suit in 1995.

IMF lauds reform efforts

AN IMF delegation visiting Cairo this week commended the widening of private sector ownership of enterprises and the government's efforts to promote private and foreign investments.

The delegation, which was headed by Howard Handy, division chief at the IMF's Middle Eastern Department, issued a report citing positive indicators of economic performance, such as the reduction of the budget deficit and the accumulation of roughly $19.1 billion in foreign currency reserves.

The current influx of domestic and foreign investments, said the report, will boost employment opportunities, particularly in the agricultural sector.

The delegation, which included Abdel-Shakour Shaalan, the IMF's executive director, met with Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri. El-Ganzouri said that Egypt will continue to implement the economic reform programme and encourage private and foreign investments in order to finance projects in the New Valley in southern Egypt, as well as Sinai.

Gas conference in Cairo

A MAJOR oil and gas conference will be held in Cairo from 10-13 February 1998. The conference — "The Middle East Show for the Oil and Gas Industry" — will bring together several international petroleum firms operating in Egypt, North Africa and the Gulf region, such as Amoco and Mobil.

Organised by the Institute for International Research (IIR), the conference will provide companies with an opportunity to showcase infrastructure facilities, as well as survey, drilling and environmental protection technology.

New hope from export council

The long-awaited inauguration of the Supreme Council for Exports promises to breathe new life into Egyptian exports, reports **Nevine Khalil**

Egypt has opened up another window onto the world economic arena by restructuring its export policies at the first meeting of the Supreme Council for Exports (SCE) last week. This shift in export policies now lays most of the responsibility for promoting exports on the shoulders of the private sector, which is being touted as the main vehicle for mass marketing Egyptian products abroad. Government bodies and banks are expected to fully support and assist in this overhaul and, if the need arises, legislation will be amended to facilitate export procedures and financing.

To that end, the government has already taken some big strides. President Hosni Mubarak has announced that the government will remove all obstacles hindering Egypt's complete entry as a competitive force in the international economic arena. Double taxation will be eliminated, and costs of production, investment, marketing and exporting will also be reviewed. Similarly, newly-created committees will immediately begin handling problems related to packaging, taxes and tariffs.

In his capacity as chairman of the SCE, President Mubarak told the group's three-hour inaugural meeting that "exports are the axes for future economic growth in Egypt". He added that in order to boost Egyptian exports, the volume must double and triple, "not only increased by a few percentage points." Mubarak also emphasised the need to establish free trade zones with a number of countries.

So what are these revised policy initiatives aimed at? According to Mubarak, the sky is the limit. All markets around the world will be targeted, especially regional ones in the Arab world. He called for the creation of private air freight companies for the transport of goods and the privatisation of maritime companies in order to bolster exports. This export promotion process will also be supported by the offices of Al-Nasr Export-Import Company and those of the Egyptian trade representatives abroad, both of which will help exporters by providing timely data on target markets.

"Large and small exporters will be encouraged and treated alike," Mubarak said, adding that marketing companies will be created to provide small exporters with access to foreign markets.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this policy shift is not only that it has set such ambitious goals, as well as a framework through which they may be realised, but it also reflects a commitment to progress. Prior to the establishment of the SCE, problems relating to exports were handled by several different ministries. This lack of coordination made it difficult to take quick, timely and solid decisions. By streamlining export procedures, the SCE has the authority "to say to everybody: this is it and it has to be done immediately," one businessman told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "Once we begin to address issues seriously, it will not be long before we can say that Egyptian exports are really enjoying the best of facilities and support from everybody in Egypt."

Although announced last year, it took several months to finalise the details for the structuring of the SCE. At first, is was believed that the council would have a private sector majority. But at its first meeting, its membership was split down the middle — with both government and non-governmental representatives forming its ranks. The non-governmental representatives include prominent businessmen like Mohamed Abul-Enein, Louis Bichara and Gamal Mubarak.

The organisation's goals, now that these structural hurdles have been overcome, will not only be to advise the government but to advise all exporters on how to transform Egypt into a major exporter.

Within two months, Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri will prepare a report on the problems confronting Egyptian exports and suggest solutions. The findings will be presented to the SCE during its next meeting in July.

Riviera on the Red Sea

A new, private sector-financed Egyptian Riviera is expected to place Egyptian resort areas on equal footing with their international counterparts. **Rehab Saad** reports

Developers and hoteliers in the French Riviera or the Caribbean may not be shaking in their boots just yet, but plans to develop the 65 kilometre stretch between Nuweiba and Taba in South Sinai may be just what the doctor ordered when it comes to giving Egyptian tourism and resorts a welcome boost.

This region, which has come to be known as the Egyptian Riviera, has recently been targeted by investors who have zeroed in on its promising tourism potential as a resort area comparable to any and all found along the shores of the Mediterranean. The proposed plans for this series of mega projects, expected to be operational within a few years, include a flurry of hotel construction, infrastructure development and the introduction of various supporting industries. Along with the aim of boosting Egyptian tourism, the projects will rival a similar joint Jordanian-Israeli riviera project — an initiative that shortly followed the signing of the 1994 peace agreement between the two countries. Although Egypt was supposed to be included in this project, it was sidelined, prompting Egyptian investors to take steps towards developing their own resort riviera.

According to Adel Radi, head of the Egyptian Tourist Development Authority (TDA), this new riviera is divided into several tourist centres which are currently under construction. Going from north to south, they are: Taba, Murakh, Moqbela, Mahashi, El-Riviera Centre, Hamyra, El-Asfal, Malha, Um Merikha and Nuweiba.

Not all these projects, however, will begin from the ground up. Taba already has a hotel, which will be expanded to include another 300 rooms. Another hotel, to be located 7km from Taba, will be built, and will have a capacity of 300 rooms.

In the other centres, similar initiatives are under way. In Murakh, the Grand Hotel Taba is nearing completion, while in Moqbela, a four million square metre mega project, including several hotels and a marina, will be carried out by the Taba Heights Company — a partnership between several major corporations and key investors like Orascom, In Tours, Mansour El-Maghraby, CIIC and Adly El-Mistikawi. The project includes three five-star hotels, scheduled to be completed in 1999, boasting a total capacity of 1,000 rooms and managed by several major international hotel companies. Along with the hotels and the marina, the town's centre will be developed and will include housing for 6,000 people, supermarkets, schools and other social services.

"The aim of the project is to create an urban centre in the area," explained the project's coordinator, Alain Besanson.

Other initiatives will be launched in Mahashi El-Asfal, involving two projects, the 325-room Riviera Beach Resort and the three-star Safari Hotel. Together, the projects have a capital of $45 million.

At Al-Malha, a 170-room, four-star tourist resort, with a capital of LE30 million, will be built and, along with the usual recreational facilities, will be a small clinic and a surgical theatre. The resort, which is scheduled to open this July, will be operated by the Best Western Company, a US-based international chain of 3,600 hotels.

TABA CENTER
EL MURAKH CENTER
MOQBELA CENTER
GULF OF AQABA

Put together, these and the other projects reflect the growing investor confidence in Sinai's tourism potential. "The area has a great future," said Besanson. "We have our airports in Taba and Dahab, as well as charter flights coming directly into Sinai... All projects are under way, and nothing will stop them."

But Besanson's confidence was not always mirrored by other investors in the past. "Until 1995, there were only six projects in the area, mainly due to the fact that investors were concerned about how to transport the necessary supplies and labour from Cairo," said Nabil Abdel-Latif, a Riviera project investor and head of the Riviera's Investors' Association. "Taba airport has solved a lot of the problems. Now, all we need is to increase the number of flights to the region."

Construction logistics aside, however, the projects are expected to significantly boost tourism in Egypt, and make this riviera competitive with any other resort around the world.

"People are always looking for new travel destinations," commented Besanson. "They used to go to North Africa, Spain or France. But now it's time that they started to come to new places like the Riviera and sample the magic of Sinai." The 15,000 rooms that are going to be available in the various hotels being built, he said, will provide roughly 30,000 visitors per year with a comfortable place in which to enjoy this "magic". An agreement has been concluded between EgyptAir and the Riviera investors to start two flights per week to the Taba airport.

"We also spoke with the Karnak Travel Agency, an affiliate of EgyptAir, to offer special packages for Egyptians and foreign residents, starting from this July," said Abdel-Rahman Mansour, another Riviera investor.

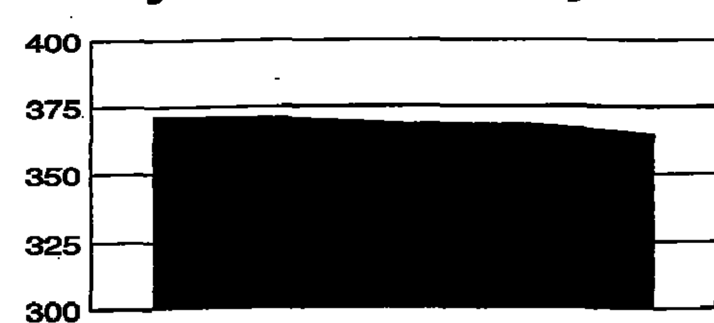
To ensure that these projects meet their mark, both in terms of service and profitability, the various investors have agreed that cooperation and coordination is the key to success. They have agreed to put aside competition in prices and overlapping projects, and to promote the region and the projects as a whole.

"This will be a team effort where we will all attend international travel fairs and events like the ITB in Berlin," Mansour said.

"We have also agreed to launch some joint projects, like common buses that will service all the tourist villages," added investor Abdel-Latif.

Market report

Watany offer raises few eyebrows



WHILE the volume of transactions for the week ending 22 May surged to LE352.67 million, the General Market Index lost 2.45 points to level off at 364.15.

The biggest surprise of the week on the market was the poor reception for the new 600,000-share stock offering by Watany Bank. Only 177,800 shares were purchased. Analysts attributed the weak demand for the stock to the drop in its value prior to the posting of the offer. Watany's share price had dropped to LE26 at the time the offer was posted, but the shares were put up for sale at LE28. Further undermining the offer was news about disputes between the bank's shareholders and its management over the company's published budget. Due to these factors, the stock's value dropped even lower to level off at LE22.25.

Another new share offer, put forth by the newly-formed Egyptian-Kuwaiti Holding Company, was better received. The company's offer of 25 per cent of its capital was 300 times over-subscribed, and its stock changed hands at LE10.

In other trading action, the Canal for Maritime Agencies Company captured the lion's share of trading in terms of the number and value of shares sold during the week. With roughly LE37 million of its stock changing hands, the company cornered 56.34 per cent of total market turnover and gained 1.75 per cent of its opening value to close at LE7.

It was the Egyptian Housing, Development and Urbanisation, however, that was the market's biggest gainer. The company's stock closed at LE19.68 — a 21.48 per cent increase over its opening value.

In all, the shares of 47 companies increased, 54 decreased and 23 remained unchanged.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

Can the land be saved?

Palestinians are becoming desperate as they battle to save the little that remains of their land, and their hope of independent statehood. **Sherine Bahaa** reports

The bodies of two Palestinians were found earlier this month in the autonomous West Bank city of Ramallah. The deceased were alleged intermediaries for Palestinian land sales to Israelis. One had been beaten to death, the other shot in the head. A third dealer was reported to have disappeared. Israeli radio said that 15 suspected land dealers were rounded up in Hebron by the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian Authority announced earlier this month that it would impose the death sentence on Palestinians or their agents convicted of selling land to Israelis. Palestinian Minister of Justice Freih Abu Median said that despite the fact that he did not approve of the murder of the two Palestinian brokers, he saw the killing as proof that "Nobody will accept a traitor."

Though selling one's land to the occupier is purely an issue of ethics, both the Israelis and the US have made it a political one. Israeli officials announced this week that they would protest to the United Nations over the death penalty decision as "racist and reeking of anti-Semitism," according to a statement issued by Danny Naveh, cabinet secretary in the government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. The US State Department has also criticised Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's harsh condemnation of Palestinians selling land to Israelis.

Israeli officials, as keen as ever in protecting their collaborators, set up a new radio service this week to broadcast the following message: "Welcome to our new national service. This service is set up by a member of the Israeli Knesset. Please, leave a voice mail at these numbers in case you are exposed to any threats from the Palestinian Authority for selling land to Jews. Be sure that we will protect you."

The issue of land control is at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinians see their hopes of establishing an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem as threatened by the expansion of Jewish settlements in those areas — sometimes on land sold to the Israelis by Arabs.

The latest crisis in the Israeli-Palestinian talks was set off in March when Israel broke ground for a new Jewish housing project in Arab East Jerusalem known as Har Homa in Hebrew and Abu Ghneim in Arabic.

As a countermeasure, Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian delegate responsible for Jerusalem, called for money to be collected to buy land from Palestinians before it falls into Israeli hands. On this land, houses for Palestinians would be built to confront the Israeli expansionist policy. Husseini's campaign proved to be ineffective as the amount of money collected proved to be insufficient for the task.

A variety of methods have been used by Jewish settler groups, in particular, to obtain property titles in Palestinian villages. Many properties have been declared "absentee property", a legalism used to gain control of Arab properties by removing the right of ownership from refugee Palestinians forced into exile. The absentee rationale also applies when the original owner dies and his or her inheritors live outside Jerusalem or the Occupied Territories. A property that has been classified as absentee property is then put under the jurisdiction of the Custodian of Absentee Property and from there often sold to settler groups.

Another method is the so-called Consumption Law for the General Benefit which allowed Israel to gain control of about 42 square kilometres of Jerusalem land confiscated from 1967 until now. According to Khalil El-Tafekji, head of the Settlement Department of the Palestinian Authority, this area equals 34 per cent of the total area of East Jerusalem and all of it is earmarked for Israeli settlements.

"We need to build houses for Palestinians to face the Israeli demography," El-Tafekji told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. He explained that the Israelis make it very difficult for Palestinians to build on their own land: "We have to pay around $20,000 to the Jerusalem municipality to get a building license, in addition to the building expenses which reach up to $250,000 for building an area of 120 square metres."

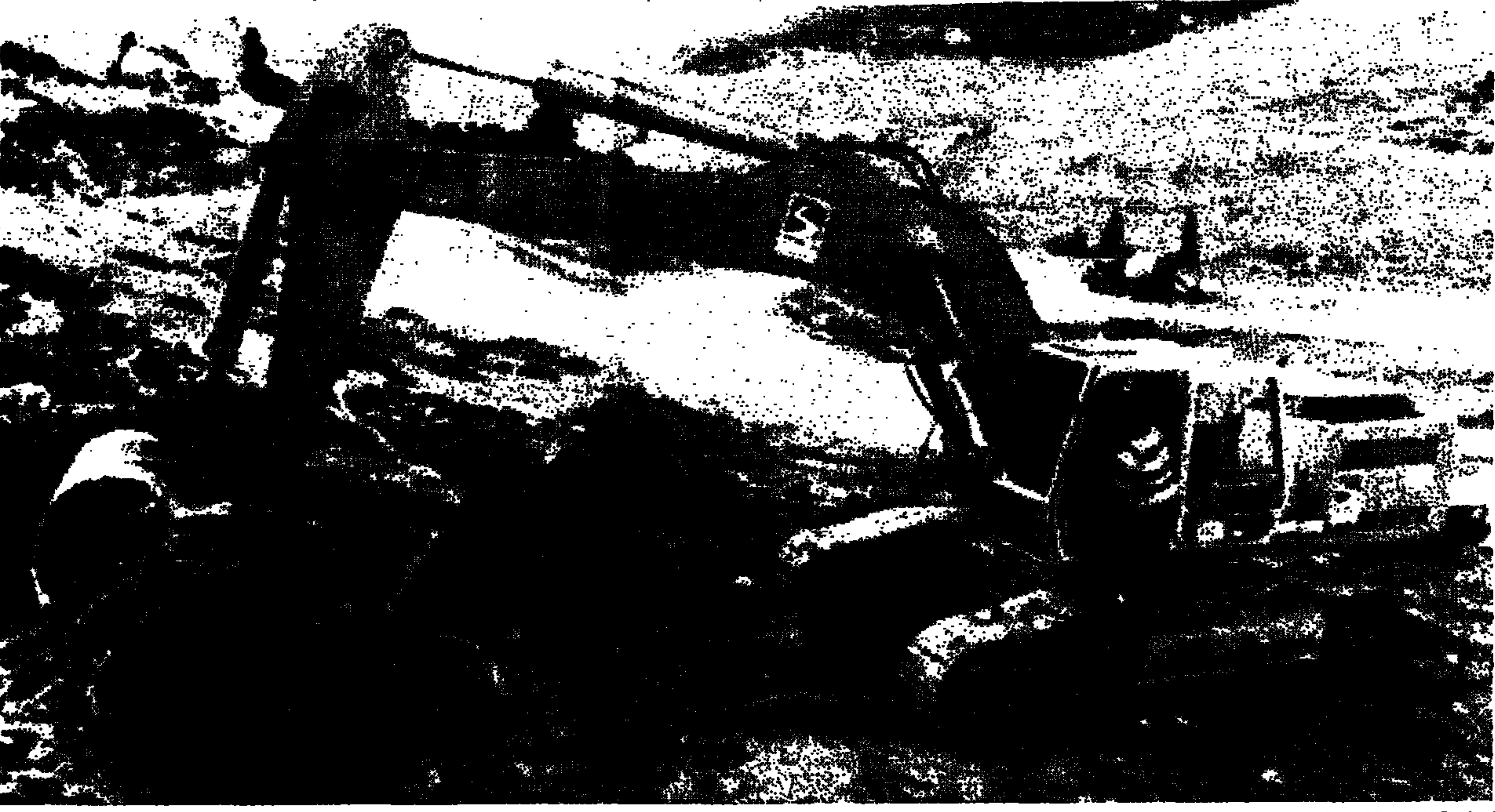
El-Tafekji conducted a study on the planning and zoning of the territories and found that 40 per cent of the territories are categorised as green lands, 34 per cent are fully under Israeli control, 14 per cent are Palestinian lands, six per cent are for roads and six per cent unplanned. "When speaking about building houses and buying land, we are referring to the 40 per cent of green lands," said El-Tafekji. "Those green lands are kept by the Israeli authorities to build settlements whenever they want."

A Palestinian society established for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment considers the Israeli appropriation of Arab lands by fraud to be of primary importance. The issue of Arab property ownership relates directly to the policies pursued by the Jerusalem municipality to deprive Palestinians of their heritage.

Noha Al-Ghoul, a Palestinian woman, has been in court since 1968 to defend her ownership of 13 dunums (about three acres) of land in an Arab village in Jerusalem known as Ras Amood. The land lies across from Al-Aqsa Mosque. "My father inherited this land from my grandfather in 1928. I have all the documents," said Al-Ghoul in an interview with the *Weekly*.

By 1968, Al-Ghoul already had to defend her ownership of the land against four separate Israeli claimants. In 1984, the Israeli authorities claimed that the land was in dispute and the court refused to issue a sentence. Later, the court refused to consider the documents confirming the right of Al-Ghoul to the land. The latest blow came in 1993 when the name of Miscovich was revealed to be the official owner of the land. Al-Ghoul rushed to the Jerusalem municipality to find out that the Al-Ghoul file had disappeared and been replaced by a Miscovich file. The case is still pending.

"But we all know that the Israeli court will never back us," Al-Ghoul said.



Even as Netanyahu was meeting with Mubarak in Sharm El-Sheikh, Israeli bulldozers continued their destructive work in Jebel Abu Ghneim *photo: Khaled Al-Zaghari*

The illegality of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land has now been compounded by the issue of low occupancy. In an apparently deliberate leak smacking of pressure, the US estimates vacancies at between 25 and 50 per cent in Gaza and the West Bank. **Graham Usher** in Jerusalem and **Hoda Tawfik** in Washington look into the implications

The tip of the iceberg

One consequence of the Oslo process has been to shift the political discourse on Israel's settlement policies away from notions of international illegality and onto the terrain of "unilateral actions" which damage trust between Israel and the Palestinians.

Binyamin Netanyahu argues that there is nothing written in the Oslo Accords which prevents Israel from building settlements, which, literally, is true. Yasser Arafat counters that settlement construction runs against the spirit of Oslo and contradicts assurances given to the PLO at the 1991 Madrid conference by the US government to "oppose settlement in the territories occupied in 1967."

These days, however, the PLO leader rarely claims that settlements are illegal under international law while prior to Oslo they were always referred to as such. Whether or not a settlement freeze comes out of the Egyptian-Israeli summit talks, this shift in definition amounts to a major Israeli victory.

This victory became apparent after a spat flared up last week between Israel and US government officials over how many apartments stand empty in Israel's 133 settlements in the Occupied Territories. During a meeting with US special envoy Dennis Ross earlier this month, Israel's Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai stated that ongoing settlement construction was required to keep pace with "the natural growth" of Israel's settler population. US officials disputed the claim. Based on research that included satellite photographs, the US demonstrated that 26 per cent of all settlement units in the West Bank are vacant, 56 per cent are vacant in the Gaza Strip and 28 per cent are empty on the Golan Heights.

Thus, according to one US official quoted in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, "there is no need for the expansion of settlements, since all of the settlers can be housed in units which already exist in established settlements. Every idea of expansion is designed to placate coalition partners of the prime minister like the National Religious Party."

Netanyahu dismissed the US research as "completely groundless". Even Israel's Peace Now Settlement Watch Organisation, which opposes settlement expansion, questioned the findings, citing its own figures of a 12 per cent vacancy rate across all settlements.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), however, was swift to make political capital out of the quarrel. "The US report shows the lies and false claims of the Israeli government," said an official from the PA's Information Ministry. He added that the vacancy rate in the settlements should be "evidence enough" for the US "to exert pressure on Israel to halt settlement expansion."

There is an obvious danger in the Palestinians, as well as the US, adopting this line of reasoning, since it turns settlement expansion into a matter of "occupancy" rather than legality. In a commentary in *Ha'aretz* on 22 May, the former deputy mayor of Jerusalem and long-time critic of Israel's settlement policies, Meron Benvenisti, pointed out the pitfalls. What "if the figures in the [US] report are erroneous and most of the apartments are occupied? Would the Americans then support the construction of the planned apartments?" Rather, he argues, the Americans would do better in "telling the Israelis explicitly that the settlements are illegal and an obstacle to peace and that expanding them could wipe out any chance for peace."

For Benvenisti, "settlement in the territories long ago ceased to be a physical-demographic phenomenon and the obsessive dealing in numbers of settlers and numbers of housing units is anachronistic." Israel's "hold on the territories is multifaceted and expresses itself in a hold on land, water, roads, population and structures. The settlements are just the tip of the iceberg, and the Oslo process did not change the rule of occupation. It just deepened it," he explains.

As if to confirm Benvenisti's analysis, an internal ministerial meeting attended by Netanyahu and the infrastructure minister, Ariel Sharon, took place on 21 May. During the meeting, Sharon reportedly argued that the only way Israel could avert a water crisis in the future would be to declare Israeli sovereignty over 50 per cent of the West Bank. "It is inconceivable," said Sharon, "that Israel should have to ask permission from the PA to lay a pipe for a Jewish town [sic] in the region." These are Sharon's ambitions even before the "territories' needs" of settlements or "specified military locations" are to be considered.

They are also Netanyahu's ambitions. On the day the US report was made public, Israel's prime minister was visiting Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley. At the Maale Ephraim settlement, Netanyahu pledged $3 million in government money to compensate settlers for losses from a dry winter and late rain storms. There are only about 300 families at Maale Ephraim. But, said Netanyahu, the investment was essential because "we view the Jordan Valley as the eastern gate to the state of Israel."

For Netanyahu and Sharon, the point about settlements is not whether the apartments are occupied or empty. It is about the assertion of sovereignty through the creation of realities on the ground.

Not pressure, but...

While a US government study of housing vacancies at Jewish settlements angered the Israeli government, it did give a push to Egypt's efforts to try to rescue the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

The study is genuine and the facts are accurate, a well-placed American official told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Observers in Washington maintain that the study was intentionally leaked to an Israeli newspaper, as it serves two purposes. Firstly, the administration was under pressure from the Palestinian Authority to take a position on the confiscation of land in the Occupied Territories. Since the Israelis contend that they need more land for settlements, the leak served to undermine the stated Israeli rationale. Secondly, for the Clinton administration, seeking as it does to avoid confrontation with Netanyahu's government, leaking the report fell short of outright pressure on the Likud government to halt the building in Jebel Abu Ghneim.

It is not a coincidence that the leak came on the heels of the failure of the mission of US special envoy Dennis Ross to the region and the demand by the Arabs and Palestinians for the United States to state its position on the Israeli settlement policy. It is no secret that the Clinton administration is sick and tired of Netanyahu's open defiance. "No one, including President Clinton himself, has prevented Netanyahu from scoring what he, and some well informed observers, consider to be a considerable diplomatic achievement on issues relating to the final status issues of Jerusalem and the settlements," wrote Geoffrey Aronson in the May-June report of the Foundation for Middle East Peace.

The report further states that "Netanyahu has successfully defied both US advice and the much harsher but equally ineffective Arab and international opposition to construction of the new settlement in annexed East Jerusalem, while demanding full US support and continuing Palestinian security cooperation."

A senior American official told the *Weekly* that the US government is not going to pressure Israel. He quoted what Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the Congress this week as proof. "It is up to the parties on the ground to make the decisions about putting the peace process back together," she said. Albright has made it official that the Middle East peace process has broken down and that nobody in the Clinton administration has a good idea on how to fix it. She told a Senate Appropriation Sub-Committee, "We are all very frustrated at the moment. We have seen a breakdown in a process that we all applauded."

When pressed by Senator Spector to cut off US aid to the Palestinians if they do not change their charter, Secretary Albright replied, "I think we have to keep in mind what it is we're trying to accomplish. Ultimately, [we want] some kind of a resumption of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. I think we have to be very careful how we react at this stage to make sure we do not worsen the situation."

As the impasse has put increasing pressure on Albright herself to go to the region, she is hesitant to plunge into the troubled waters, unless the negotiations resume between the two parties. She has nothing more to offer than Dennis Ross. The administration's suggestion is a freeze on new settlements pending the final status negotiations. The CIA study on housing vacancies in the Jewish settlements of the West Bank and Gaza supports that demand because it proves that a quarter of West Bank apartments are empty and, therefore, there is no need for further construction.

A senior Arab diplomat told the *Weekly* that the leak of the American study was a timely development for Egypt to utilise. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said that the "loan guarantee legislation that made possible US loan guarantees to Israel imposes responsibilities on the administration which require us to monitor settlement activity, settlement construction and occupancy. In light of this, we do make judgements, which we pass on to the Congress," he said.

Even though the arrangement for the loan guarantee expired months ago, the administration used the same requirements to report on settlement activity at this time of crisis in the peace process. An administration official told the *Weekly* that Dennis Ross discussed the report with Netanyahu in his efforts to stop the building of new settlements as a gesture to open the way for the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. The American proposal falls short of the Palestinian demand that construction at Abu Ghneim has to halt before the talks can resume.

On the eve of the Sharm El-Sheikh summit, Netanyahu told Fox TV news channel that he does not accept Arafat's preconditions for a resumption of talks. Asked what President Hosni Mubarak can do to push the peace process forward, he answered that "Egypt could encourage the Palestinians to move forward. On the other hand, if Egypt is less compromising, you can hardly expect the Palestinians to be more forthcoming."

The test of Birzeit

Politics in Birzeit University, an island of democracy amidst a sea of occupation and authoritarianism, provides a better gauge than most of the current Palestinian political mood, writes **Graham Usher** from Ramallah

Perched on a forested hill 15 kilometres north of Ramallah, Birzeit has long held the reputation of being Palestine's premier university, both in terms of academic standards and nationalist militancy. "Birzeit has something very special," says Islah Jad, a lecturer in sociology at the university. "It has a democratic culture."

It is a culture which has spawned some of the most prominent and articulate figures in Palestinian politics (the Palestinian Authority's current higher education minister, Hanan Ashrawi, was a former dean of English literature). In the past, the university regularly drew the heat of Israel's occupation.

Set up in 1972, Birzeit enjoyed the dubious distinction of being closed down by Israel as often as it was allowed open. The longest continuous closure was during the Intifada, when the Israeli army sealed the campus from January 1988 to April 1992. With the Oslo accords and the arrival of the PA, the days of closure are viewed as "long gone", says Birzeit's president, Hanna Nasser. But "the occupation remains a reality that causes enormous problems for us."

Following a raid of nearby villages in March 1996, the Israeli army has prevented all Gaza-based Palestinian students from attending West Bank universities, a denial of education that has affected some 1,300 students. None of Birzeit's 350 students enrolled from Gaza for this academic year have been granted a permit to enter the West Bank, says Birzeit's Public Relations officer, Albert Aghazarian. But, he adds, "most" have found their way to the campus.

They resort to discreet means. Some students stay over "illegally" in the West Bank, risking imprisonment or deportation back to Gaza. Others travel by hiding in the backs of lorries. There have been cases of Gaza students reaching the West Bank via Egypt and Jordan.

The result is a war of attrition as Gaza students dodge "spot" army checkpoints that periodically appear on roads leading to the campus. "We never ask the Gaza students how they get here," says West Bank Birzeit student Khalid Barghouti. "But we are one people and we will not be denied our right to education. The students will get here via China, if necessary."

This tradition of defiance applies to the PA as much as to Israel. After the Islamist-inspired suicide attacks in Israel last year, the PA's security forces mounted a ferocious offensive against Palestinian universities, raiding the campuses of Gaza's Islamic and Nablus's An-Najah universities, and detaining 15 students from Birzeit on suspicion of Islamist affiliation. There were also ominous signs of infiltration of the student body by the PA's myriad intelligence forces, often posing as "student activists" belonging to Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement.

In response, in April 1996 Birzeit students led a 1,000-strong march on the PA's elected Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), ignoring both PA police checkpoints and gunfire to make their point. In an impromptu dialogue with Arafat on the streets of Ramallah, the students demanded the sanctity of Palestinian campuses and an end to raids, whether by Israel or the PA.

Arafat backed down. In the months after the confrontation, the 15 Birzeit students were released, all without charge. A PA decision to install "special university guards" on campuses was also, quietly, shelved. "It wasn't a victory for Birzeit. It was a victory for Palestinian society," said Ibrahim Krashah, a Fatah student activist who led the protests at Birzeit.

This dissension has left its mark on the politics of Birzeit, most notably in the electoral struggle between Fatah and Islamist students for Birzeit's 51-seat student council. In 1996, the Islamist bloc took over the council by winning 23 seats to Fatah's 17. Given Birzeit's secular and nationalist history, it was a result that sent shock waves throughout Palestinian society. With the Oslo peace process in virtual collapse, the expectation for this year's election was that the Islamist bloc would win by a landslide.

It didn't happen. In a meticulously governed election on 9 April (PA officials were not allowed anywhere near the count, says Hanna Nasser, "not even as observers"), Fatah's *Shabiba* youth bloc regained the student council by 22 seats to 20 for the Islamists.

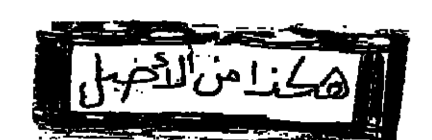
For Krashah, the victory had less to do with any decline in Hamas's popular appeal than in political changes that have occurred in Fatah. "We decided this year to distance ourselves from the PA," he says. "At our election meetings, there were no posters of Yasser Arafat. Nor did Fatah hold back on its criticisms of the PA's human rights violations and its disrespect of the political independence of Palestinian universities."

In fact, Fatah's "distancing" went further than election pledges. In discussions prior to the poll, it was decided that no Fatah member could stand as a candidate if he or she was employed by the PA. "We had to win back the students' trust," said Krashah.

Other commentators see Fatah's win as evidence of subtle changes in the content of mainstream Palestinian nationalism. "In the elections, interest in women's issues was not confined to feminist organisations, but was of concern to all politically aware students," says Islah Jad.

It was an awareness Fatah students exploited in their electoral tussle with Hamas. At the hustings, the argument was that while the Islamists advocated "democracy" in politics, such pluralism did not extend to gender issues. During the campaign, Hamas students had criticised the "promiscuous behaviour" of many female students on campus, especially those who had recently returned to the Occupied Territories from a life in exile with the PLO. It was a charge many "home" students found divisive and socially intolerant. Islamist vitriol against "female morality" was "our biggest mistake", admitted an Islamist candidate after the vote.

At a time of Palestinian cynicism at the peace process in particular and national politics in general, Birzeit's commitment to democracy and diversity is salutary. "At Birzeit, we don't outlaw the opposition," says Albert Aghazarian. "We incorporate all streams through our practice of democracy, pluralism and institution-building. It is a model we hope to extend to Palestinian society as a whole".



Iran has scored two major coups in quick succession. Its Palme d'Or win in the Cannes Film Festival has been eclipsed by a drastic change of political fortunes which came when its voters elected a moderate clergyman to the presidency, in what many consider a snub to the system

Iran's quiet revolution

The landslide victory of Ayatollah Khatami was a clear message from the Iranian people to both their ruling religious establishment and the world. Safa Haeri, in Paris, ponders the implications

By giving the 54-year-old Ayatollah Seyyed Muhammad Khatami a landslide victory in their seventh presidential elections held on 23 May, the Iranians, including their despised ruling clerics, proved once again to the world that they can surprise everyone. Not only because no one, absolutely no one, expected Khatami to win over Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the candidate of the high and mighty clique and the orthodox dominated politico-religious establishment, but also because of the way the later conceded defeat, congratulated the winner and assured him of his "full support and cooperation."

Almost all analysts and observers, inside and outside the country, interpreted the outcome of the elections as a "a quiet coup," "an earth tremor," "a slap in the face of the ruling ayatollahs" and "an outright rejection of the *velayat-e-faqih* system." So swift, clear and unquestionable was the victory of the neatly-dressed Khatami over his challenger Nateq-Nouri, also 54.

"This was above all a protest vote against the core of the religious establishment and its policies, both internal and external. Also, Khatami represents the lively Iranian civil society as well as the young generation aspiring for modernity, looking to the future and not going backwards, as the ayatollahs want to take them," noted a senior Iranian analyst in Tehran.

Khatami's overwhelming victory surprised almost everyone, as Nateq-Nouri, who, being the leadership's protégé, was assisted in his campaign by the system's huge and well-oiled electoral machine, the notorious Information (Intelligence) Ministry, the sprawling "mosque and mullah" network, the state-owned radio and television as well as the many mullah-controlled *newspapers*.

Khatami's victory was so stunning, so clear cut, so thunder-like that it did not leave any room for rigging.

As the results communicated to the residence of Ayatollah Khamenei, where several high ranking ayatollahs, including Nateq-Nouri himself were present, confirmed minute after minute the victory of Ayatollah Khatami, claims were about to be made about fraud and manipulation. But considering the huge gap separating him from his rival Nateq-Nouri, the idea was dropped and, in a typically Western fashion, Nateq-Nouri accepted the defeat and congratulated Khatami, an informed source reported.

Minutes after Khatami's victory was confirmed, people flocked into the streets, congratulating each other, offering sweets and pastry, and cars put on their headlights, drivers and passengers making the sign of victory.

A Tehran resident said: "It was like the day the Shah left Tehran 18 years ago. It was the same mood. People were so nice to each other. But this time, the people were exacting revenge against a regime which had so badly deceived them, so badly violated their basic rights. And again, it was a victory for the Iranian civil society, for the youngsters, for the women who, despite all the hardship, never gave up."

"Clearly, people protested the hardship imposed on them by the orthodox ayatollahs. People told the regime that they want more freedom, less intervention from religion in their life, private and public. People told the rulers they want social justice, progress and a better life. People told the ruling ayatollahs that they want to be respected, ruled by law and not thugs," one analyst noted.

With their vote, people also contested the previous government's provocative *foreign policy, particularly its overt and* covert support for terrorism.

The analyst added: "The Iranians urged the clerical rulers to stop supporting terrorist organisations, which cost the Iranians hundreds of million dollars a year while many people inside the country suffer from poverty. They told the regime they no more wanted to be branded as terrorists when they travel abroad."

In his latest press conference, Ali Akbar Velayati, the Iranian foreign minister reminded the world that "it is the leader and not the president who decides and dictates all major policies of the nation".

At present, and precisely because of the leader's will, Iran is isolated in the international arena. Ayatollah Khamenei has ruled out normalisation with Washington as well as Cairo. He is also responsible for Iran's strained relations with the European Union as well as with many Arab and Muslim world capitals.

Can the future president of Iran remove the *fatwa* against the Anglo-Indian writer Salman Rushdie, a condition for full normalisation with Europe? Can he make any overtures towards the United States or normalise relations with Egypt? Can he relinquish Iranian sovereignty over the three islands of the Persian Gulf claimed by the United Arab Emirates, a condition for good relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arabs? Can he block the millions of dollars Iran provides to militant Islamist groups in the Arab world on strict orders from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei? Can he take a more moderate stand towards the peace process? The answer to all these questions is a blunt no.

Nevertheless, most observers agree that the outside world must hear the message sent by the Iranian people and answer it positively.

The writer is a Paris-based Iranian journalist.



FATHI

Dancing in the streets

In Cannes and in Tehran, it is a time for Iranians to celebrate, writes Asef Bayat

During the last two weeks, Iranians received good news on two fronts. First, Abbas Kia-Rostami received the prestigious Palme d'Or award in the Cannes Film Festival for his movie *The Taste of Cherries*. Second, Muhammad Khatami, a gentle clerical figure, won the presidential elections with a wide margin on 23 May 1997, defeating a well-established conservative, Ayatollah Nateq-Nouri. Iranians hope that Kia-Rostami's victory in Cannes will perhaps alter some of the stereotypes in the West which portray Iranians mostly in terms of fanaticism and violence and will remind the average Westerner that despite its political troubles, Iran is a land of art and a vibrant cultural tradition.

But the second victory seems more far-reaching. Khatami, a cleric, intellectual and professor of philosophy, surprisingly drew the support of over 70 per cent of the people from a conservative rival, the leader of the *Majlis*, who until a few days ago was acting like a president. What does Khatami's victory mean, and what implications will it have on Iran's internal situation and international standing?

The fact that Rafsanjani did step down as president when his term came to an end — despite suggestions that the Constitution be amended to keep him in power— and that the election results were not "fixed" to make Nateq-Nouri (a favourite of Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Khamenei) the president is in itself remarkable. This state of lawfulness is indeed a welcome development in Iran. Let us not forget that life-time presidents are not few in the region.

Surely, Khatami's charm, modesty and above all his intellectual stature did play a role in his electoral win. The average Iranian is impressed by men of knowledge and culture. Bani Sadr, Bahonar, Rafsanjani and even Ayatollah Khomeini were primarily viewed more as men of knowledge than of politics. Rumour has it that Nateq-Nouri began to wear spectacles to enhance his image as a *ba-savaad* or a cultured man.

However, Khatami's victory manifests more than that. It reflects a deep desire on the part of the vast majority of the people for a genuine change in their country's social and political arenas. Although most urbanites have in recent years suffered from high inflation and unemployment, the economy did not fare high in the election campaign. The fundamental concerns were those of individual freedom, democracy, social justice and tolerance. For those who voted for Khatami — mainly women, the youth, the modern urban middle classes and the minorities — these concerns constituted immediate burning issues.

Khatami's victory symbolises the deep desire for social expression on the part of the demoralised majority, those who were excluded from political participation and a collective role in the society, leaving the political stage to the active minority — the informal groups and organised supporters of the conservative clergy. A 90 per cent turn-out in the election is indeed remarkable — the demoralised became activated.

Women, vastly mobilised during and after the revolution, soon *came to grips with forced veiling and numerous* laws that threatened their well-being. The Islamic government did mobilise women to build a social basis. But this selective mobilisation unintentionally raised women's expectations, which could not be fulfilled within the patriarchal constraints of the post-revolutionary legal and political system. Thus, while segments of women became demoralised, others took matters into their own hands to raise consciousness and resist unjust legislation. Most of these came from urban and educated middle classes.

Khatami's victory also shows how decisive women voters, when mobilised, can be in the context of countries like Iran. Indeed, opinion polls before the elections all showed Nateq-Nouri having a comfortable lead. But these polls were largely conducted in the streets, ignoring women at home. Hence, the surprise of the election day, when housewives poured into the polling stations *en masse*.

While perhaps the exclusion of women could be ignored, the authorities could hardly dismiss the growing dissatisfaction of a massive modern youth. The youth expressed their anguish over bleak economic prospects, the suppression of their youthful desires and the absence of an ideology that could utilise their energies. The conventional Islamist rhetoric could no longer work for these children of the revolution. During the 1990s, they were living in a post-Islamist era. At this time, many young people turned to violence, nihilism and a dream of leaving the country.

Acknowledging the passive rebellion of the youth, officials bemoaned the laxity in wearing the *hijab* among young women and the lack of interest in religious literature and programmes.

Although the Islamic government based its legitimacy on the primacy of Islam, rather than ethnic superiority, and despite impressive rural development, a centre-periphery system continued after the revolution. Tehran, with its majority Persian population, continued to be the centre of power, as well as the economic and cultural production.

While Nateq-Nouri pursued traditional strategies and tactics in his electoral campaign — it was as if he was still living in the mid-1980s — Khatami seemed to recognise the advent of a new era, with new needs and concerns. And it was precisely on these that he focused his attention. But what are the implications of all this? His victory has been hailed by some as the "advent of the second revolution". The jubilance and a remarkable air of optimism, on the evening of 24 May, was reminiscent of the revolutionary days of 1979. The victors danced in the streets, passed out candies, and mothers called on their exiled children to return home. While the landslide victory has given the new president a strong mandate to launch his policies, at the same time it poses a formidable challenge. His supporters expect wider individual freedoms and an atmosphere of tolerance, democracy, rule of law, civil society and social justice. If their wishes are not fulfilled, more nihilism, apathy and violence are likely to follow. In addition, the legitimacy of clerical institutions will suffer further.

Fixing the economy, creating jobs and curbing inflation would not be easy in the short run. Offering a brighter economic prospect for the youth is a great challenge. Nevertheless, his emphasis on some degree of state intervention is likely to protect the vulnerable groups against the market rationale. Big merchants and their political allies, the conservative clergy, may not like this. Despite recent talk of "national consensus" and "cooperation", clashes in and outside the *Majlis* are not unlikely. The new president will start his policies smoothly attempting not to antagonise the conservatives, in particular Khamenei who will probably receive daily complaints from the defeated conservatives.

Surely, structural hindrances to genuine reform exist. The new president has repeatedly declared his allegiance to the concept of the *velayat-e-faqih*, the rule of the supreme jurist, the pillar of the Islamic state — a position that distinguishes him from those Islamist intellectuals such as Abdul-Karim Soroush. Although some relaxation of tensions with the West is likely, one should not expect a dramatic change in foreign policy so long as conservatives can use the "Great Satan" to challenge any significant rapprochement, and so long as the US continues to treat Iran as an international bogeyman. Khatami may not be able to bring about profound change at the state level, but his unequivocal emphasis on the creation of a vibrant civil society and rule of law, if it materialises, would have far-reaching consequences for the future of democracy in the country.

He has said that it is better to follow laws even if they are deficient. This is aimed to end arbitrary rule, informal power holders and a general insecurity. On the other hand, his interest in civil rights, a strong civil society and institutions can open up new social arenas for a dynamic intellectual life, organised activism and independent social mobilisation. After all, it was he who, as minister of culture, contributed to a flourishing period of cultural activity and political debate.

The writer is an associate professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo.

'I value order and beauty'

In the spring of 1997, the Tehran-based women's monthly *Zanan* interviewed Muhammad Khatami, a then-presidential hopeful. Below are extracts translated from the Persian by Asef Bayat

Muhammad Khatami was born in 1943 in a clerical family in the provincial city of Ardakan, Yazd province. He completed his school years there under his father's supervision, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khatami. After obtaining his diploma, he went to Qum and then Isfahan where he began to study simultaneously philosophy at Isfahan University and religious subjects in the seminary of that city. Back in Qum, he obtained his Ijtihad *(Ph.D.) seven years later. In 1970, he began an M.A. in Tehran Teacher Training College, and after winning a scholarship, he went abroad to do another Ph.D. Before the revolution, he was director of the Islamic Centre at Hamburg, Germany.*

In 1989, Khatami was elected to the Majlis*, the parliament, as the deputy for his birthplace. In the meantime, he was appointed to direct* Kayhan *daily newspaper. In 1982, he became minister of culture and Islamic guidance in Mussavi's government and held the same post under subsequent governments. As of 1992, he has been adviser to President Rafsanjani, director of Iran's National Library as well as professor of philosophy at Tehran University. He speaks Arabic, German and English.*

Extracts from the interview:

You are mostly well-known among the literati and intellectual classes, rather than the ordinary people. Is this a virtue or a problem?

Well, I have a constituency among the educated groups because of my official and professional positions. After the revolution and because I worked in the daily newspaper *Kayhan*, in the Ministry of Culture, in the National Library and in the university, I have naturally been engaged mostly with those interested in culture, art and literature. But I do respect all social groups, and enjoy associating with them. At this time, it is imperative to communicate with all people.

Mr Khatami, to what extent is the public opinion, people's ideas, important for you?

The opinion of each individual is to be respected, let alone that of the majority of people. Yet, an expert and a thinker, nonetheless, has his own criteria for truth, which helps him/her to distinguish between right and wrong.

A fair person is one who does not consider himself absolutely right, and is prepared to change his ideas when confronted with stronger logic and firmer reason, one who is always ready to listen to others and have dialogue with them.

When a system is based on people's ideas, it is their [majority] ideas that, within the conventional frameworks, should guide our practices.

You have always stressed the rule of law. What do you think of those laws which have caused problems for women?

Respect for the law prevents arbitrary rule, and protects the rights of the citizens... Both men and women will benefit from the consolidation of a civil society that is based upon the rule of law. So, even if a law is deficient, it is better to be respected than not.

As for women rights, in the last few years, useful laws have been established which protect the rights of women. The revolution has done a considerable service to women. Their participation in the various scientific, educational, cultural, athletic, economic, social and political fields has been encouraged and even guaranteed.

At any rate, women, if they have demands, they should put them forward and then pursue them with perseverance. They have actually done so, and have achieved results in many areas.

I believe that we can make better laws if we change our views about the world and human beings, including the position and status of women.

Of course, we are Muslims, and it is imperative to follow the Islamic principles. However, with different approaches, one can make different interpretations of the religious texts.

Do you approve of the appointment of women in government?

The criterion for assigning social and political responsibilities in an Islamic system is not gender, but merit. By this I am pointing to those who ignore women's capabilities because of their sex.

I believe that women's merit in our society is more than their actual position. Women should be given opportunity to be present more widely in the managerial levels. A few might face difficulties or might not do well; but this should not be generalised to negate women's abilities in general.

What positions/posts do you envisage for women?

That depends on their merits and the needs of our society.

What do you think of women becoming ministers?

Appointing a minister is a complex and a multi-dimensional issue. Many institutions have a say in it, not just the president. But I personally do not see any problem with women becoming ministers.

I do not see difference between a man and a woman.

What about women becoming presidents [a matter which is prohibited by the Constitution]?

At the conceptual level, we should launch a debate about this issue. There are many thinkers who believe in women becoming presidents. But the official interpreter of the Constitution is the Council of the Guardians.

Some believe that to really improve the conditions of women in Iran, the Women's Affairs Advisory Office should be turned into a ministry of women affairs. What is your comment?

I think to improve the position of women [in Iran], it is more important to increase the women's NGOs than to strengthen specific state institutions.

Mr Khatami what do you think are the most important problems relating to women in our society?

One is the lack of self-esteem and self-reliance. The other is the domination of a patriarchal culture which has permeated all aspects of our life.

We should reach a moderate solution to this problem, which is scientific, religious and logical. That is, to recognise that while a woman as a woman has a heavy duty as a mother and a wife, at the same time she should be allowed to play her social, political and scientific role in the society.

I hope that the Iranian Muslim women become a model for all other women in the world.

Being a president requires one to seek power. But this does not seem to be your driving motive. Would you comment?

Power hunger is a great illness for those who are already in high positions. What is essential for fine management is to create a space within which various kinds of ideas and plans can operate. It also includes utilisation of those ideas, resolution in decision making, and recognition of legality as the basis of social order. I am very serious about all of these.

To what extent can women be assured that under your presidency no one will bother them?

Everyone in a healthy society should be assured that their rights are respected, their potential realised, and that they would get what they deserve.

What can develop and even maintain a society is the creation of security within the framework of law. And women should be able to enjoy such a right.

What do you think of *hijab*?

The *shari'a* (Islamic law) should be applied and the dignity of Muslim women be secured.

You lived in Europe for some years. What influence did it have on you?

The West possesses a gigantic civilisation and a particular culture of its own, which has affected the entire world. We should not feel weak against it.

Understanding the West has always been important for me. My brief stay in the West has helped me in this respect, but I rely more on my own study and research.

What will you do with the violators of law and order?

It is the task of the judiciary to fight against the violators. But the president, as the protector of the Constitution, must defend the basic rights of the people.

I think it is crucial to seriously consider forming a court which protects the Constitution. Violation of laws is the enemy of stability, and an unstable society cannot progress. We should resolutely fight against this.

Do you have a TV set at your house?

Not in Iran. We had one in Europe.

Does your wife work outside the home?

No.

Mr Khatami, do you assign special duties for your wife at home?

My wife manages the home with sacrifice and thought. Our children and myself owe her so much. What she does is, I am sure, beyond the conventional duties.

Love governs our relationship because it is based upon mutual understanding. She knows I have heavy duties to perform. If I have had a modest success, I owe that, a great deal, to my wife. And for this, I am grateful to her.

Do you ever see movies?

I love to see movies. But because of my preoccupations, I cannot do this as much as I like.

Do you go to the cinema, or do you watch movies at home?

When I can, I do go to the cinema, especially during the festivals.

Do you go to movies with your family?

Yes. But they also go on their own.

Does your wife need to get your permission to leave home?

No.

Who runs your household?

The relationship among all of us is based upon affection. Although, my wife is rightfully above the rest.

Mr Khatami, have you ever sat next to your wife, letting her do the driving?

Well, unfortunately, my wife does not drive. I wish she could.

Do you really take seriously the economic independence of women?

In my view, our dear women have both the capability and the right to engage in economic activity. They should not be deprived of this right.

When did you get married?

In 1974.

How old was your wife then?

24

And how educated is she?

She has a high school diploma.

How many children do you have?

Two daughters and one son.

Will you get your daughters married as soon as possible?

None of them are married, and they are free to decide when to marry. Of course, we do respect advice and dialogue in our family.

What will you do to solve the problem of the boy-girl relationships in our society?

In this respect, we do have a problem on our hands. We have a young population, and the age of marriage in Iran has gone up. The period between puberty and marriage is a critical time.

To tackle this problem there is a need for a complex examination from religious, scientific, legal, social, cultural and even political perspectives. Surely, you cannot resolve this by purely legal means.

Before that, one should create the necessary social and cultural background. This is the task of the enlightened *ulema*, committed scientists and thinkers. If we do not take into account the religious yardsticks and if we are lax about *shari'a* principles, we would be courting disaster.

People think that you are attractive and chic. Do you consciously attempt to appear that way?

I value order *and beauty*. A moderate person needs these, and Islam approves. As far as possible, I try to be so, without allowing this to get in the way of my main tasks.

Well, I am not sure how people interpret this.

The Congolese polemic

The Congo's fortunes may be looking up at last but will democracy be given a chance? asks Gamal Nkrumah

What persuaded Congolese President Laurent Désiré Kabila to drop Etienne Tshisekedi's name from the list of cabinet ministers in his new government? Apparently, Tshisekedi wanted to be premier. Washington, Paris and Brussels have all called on Kabila to take Tshisekedi on board as prime minister or vice-president and told him to form a broad-based government of national unity. Kabila would have obliged, but there are serious misgivings about Tshisekedi's past in Kabila's camp.

Tshisekedi, lest we forget, was once Mobutu's hatchet-man or "justice commissar". It was Tshisekedi who signed the arrest warrant for Patrice Lumumba, Zaire's legendary first prime minister assassinated in 1961. How then can Kabila, who considers himself to be Lumumba's political heir, offer Tshisekedi the premiership of the new Congo? Ideologically that simply would never wash among the diehard Lumumbists who now control Congo.

People have taken to the streets of Kinshasa both against and in support of Tshisekedi. Tshisekedi told his supporters on Saturday that it was a bad day for democracy. He called on his followers to resist the Kabila administration "to the end" and that the government from which he was left out "does not exist to me."

Will Tshisekedi's protests prove to be infectious? Are other Congolese voices going to join in the anti-Kabila chorus? Will his long experience in dealing with Mobutu be seen as so extensive as to be difficult to ignore? Tshisekedi worked closely with Mobutu throughout the 1960s and 1970s. It was only in the late 1980s that trouble began to brew between the two. Still only last month, Tshisekedi travelled to the French Riviera to get the ailing Mobutu to appoint him as Zaire's premier. From his sickbed Mobutu scoffed at the idea. At present Tshisekedi does not look like presidential material. A clash between the expectations of Tshisekedi's supporters and reality on the ground in Kinshasa is inevitable.

Kabila has every right except that of using force against his political opponents. However, to guard against further agitation, Kabila on Monday banned all activities by political parties as well as public demonstrations.

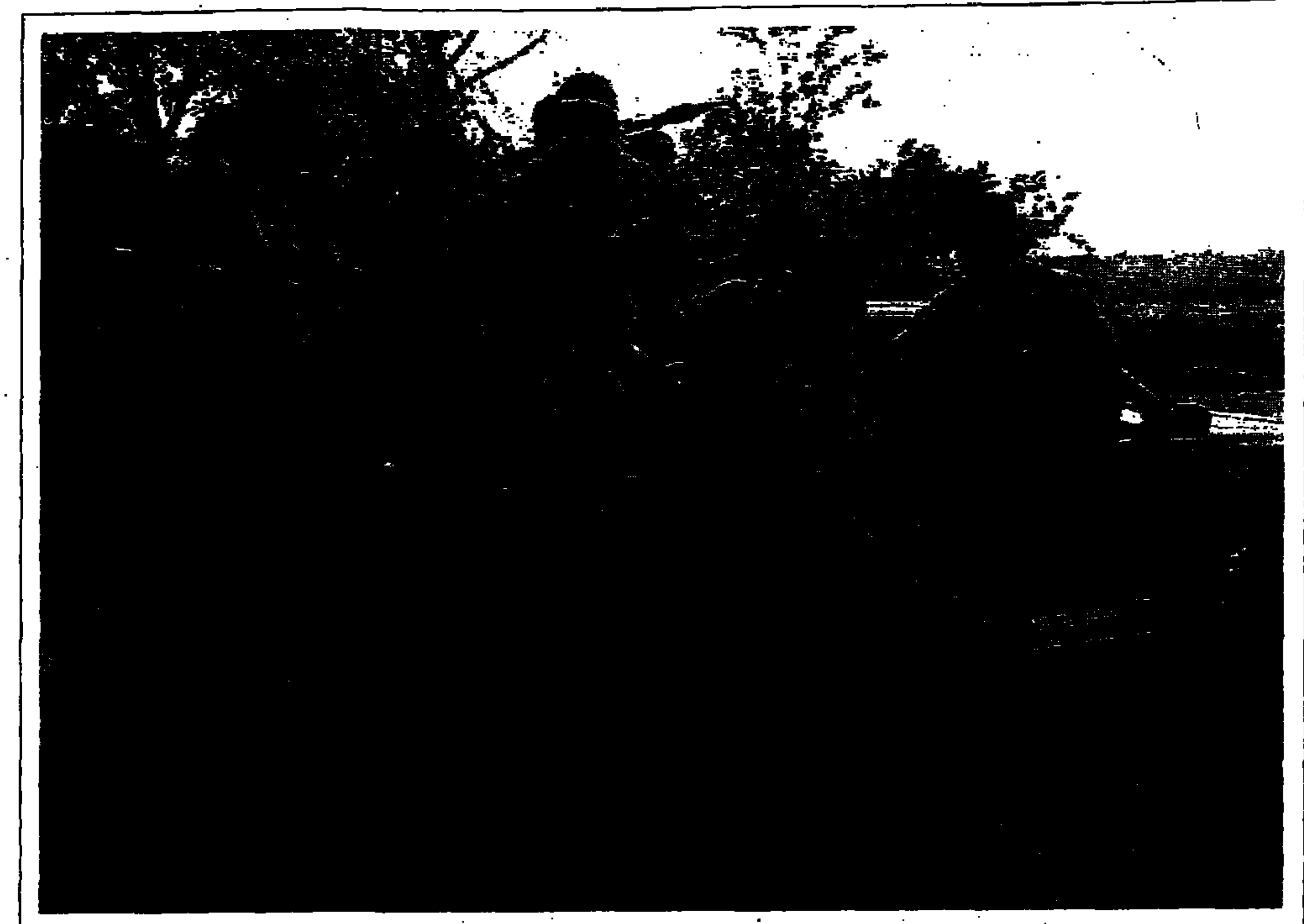
A discontented Congolese public is what Kabila must avoid at all costs. As Kabila and Tshisekedi sound each other out, Africa and the world hold their breath. Neither Kabila nor Tshisekedi are as telegenic as Mobutu was in his heyday. Even in sickness, Mobutu had a certain *je ne sais quoi* — perhaps it was the sheer impudence of siphoning away billions of his people's hard earned cash. But Kabila emerged from the forest triumphant, crossing Zaire and routing Mobutu's army in seven months. He is a denizen of the deep, but initial contacts with Western envoys have proved successful. His people, too, do not yet know what to make of him. He is seen as a liberator, one who, unlike Tshisekedi and his ilk, actually rid the country of Mobutu and his retinue.

Democratisation in Congo must be a gradual process. To win the hearts and minds of all Congolese, Kabila will have to live with adversity as readily as he now delights in his popularity. Should we doubt Kabila's intent to democratise the country and overhaul the old authoritarian state structures? Will Tshisekedi's influence ultimately wane? If it does, it will put the wind up Washington.

Washington is the power behind the Anglophone drive to develop Congo's fabled wealth. French interests in Africa are at stake. France, the main backer of Congo's *ancien régime*, has arrangements with six Francophone African countries under which 8,000 French troops are permanently stationed on the continent.

A curious development in Kinshasa is that many of the officials of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) are English-speakers. Like Rwanda before it, Congo appears to be moving away from using French as the official language of business and government and adopting English instead. French and Belgian businessmen have been replaced by Americans and South Africans. For political parties across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the original name of the vast central African nation, there have been lessons to be learnt from the ADFL's swift conquest of Congo. Kabila's ability to generate a surge in popular support astounded many of the continent's political observers.

Popular as he is, Kabila's failure to include Tshisekedi in his government got a mixed reception in Kinshasa. Kabila is an ethnic Luba from Katanga. Tshisekedi is from Kasai. Ethnic conflict is a constant worry in Congo. Tshisekedi has made barely veiled threats that he might use the tribal card against Kabila. Kasai is the most populous and geographically central of Congo's provinces. It is also diamond-rich. Tshisekedi has considerable following in Kinshasa, too. He has some backing from both Belgium, the former colonial power, and the United States. That is a two-edged endorsement. America's commendation is not always welcome in Africa — especially not in a country now ruled by Lumumbists. But it is not clear if Kabila will meet stiff opposition from other quarters, including the local and foreign business community. At any rate, Kabila is not easily frightened. He, too, has the American and British tacit support — be it conditional.



An obscure army major, Jolly Paul Koroma, staged a coup d'etat in the tiny West African nation of Sierra Leone on Sunday night and ousted the popularly elected civilian President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. After a first round of elections marred by violence, a former distinguished lawyer, Kabbah was installed as President of Sierra Leone on 15 March 1996 with 60 per cent of the vote. Kabbah signed a peace accord with Foday Sankoh's *Revolutionary United Front in November 1996. Earlier this year, Sankoh was detained under effective house arrest in neighbouring Nigeria. The junior officers who staged Sunday's coup called for the return of Sankoh.* The situation in mineral-rich Sierra Leone remains uncertain *(photo:AFP)*

The ADFL won partly because it broke with socialism. And because Kabila has little scope for increasing taxes, he has asked the US, France and Belgium to follow Switzerland's lead and freeze all of Mobutu's assets. Kabila's incredible achievements on the battlefield will remain in jeopardy unless he moves more quickly to finish the job of liberating Congo's economy.

All eyes are on Kabila's prize: a reinvigorated Congolese economy. American and South African companies are gearing up to reap huge profits from Congo's expected economic bonanza. Having shed much of its traumatic apartheid-ridden history to look outward to the rest of Africa, South Africa is now focusing on Congo as its new economic partner on the continent.

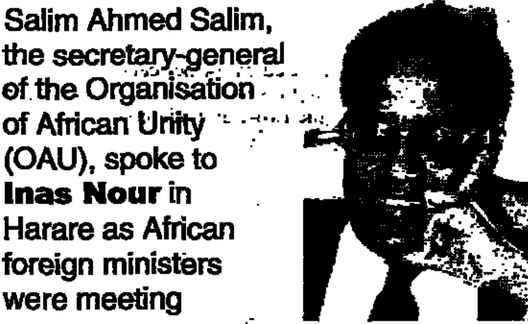
But, is Kabila's Congo an agreeable business partner? After languishing for long in the wilderness, Kabila nationalised the former Zaire's national railway, Sizarail, a joint venture between Spoornet, the Belgian state railway operator, and four major Congolese public companies including Gecamines. Neither the South Africans nor the West were amused. France insists that the possibility that Congo lives up to its full economic potential deserves to be investigated with a certain amount of wariness. And sure enough, as soon as Paris starts looking closely at the Congolese, ethnic conflict rears its ugly head.

The terror of tribalism looms large. "Rwanda for the Rwandans, Congo for the Congolese," is Tshisekedi supporters' favourite slogan. The insinuation is that Kabila's army is made up of mainly ethnic Tutsis from Rwanda but the ADFL is an alliance of various regionally-based political groups. These are highly disciplined and militarised organisations. "We are not prepared to tolerate Tshisekedi's or anyone else's nonsense," warned Bizima Karaha, Congo's new foreign minister. Ominously, Karaha, an English-speaking ethnic Tutsi from Eastern Zaire, added that the ADFL has "no time for Tshisekedi's games. We are not ready to take any nonsense from anybody for whatever reason just to make sure people are happy."

Thus, at every turn, Tshisekedi runs into a roadblock. The West wants to keep Tshisekedi as a counter-balance to Kabila in case the latter becomes difficult or reverts to the revolutionary rhetoric of yesteryear. *This is a balance that will be difficult to* preserve. It does not augur well for a smoothly-run Congolese democracy.

Africa's bird's-eye view

Salim Ahmed Salim, the secretary-general of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), spoke to **Inas Nour** in Harare as African foreign ministers were meeting



The OAU's 66th Council of Ministers session began yesterday. What is the significance of the Harare summit that will follow next week?

The OAU's Harare conference is significant in that it is the first summit to take place in the region after the whole of southern Africa was liberated. The meeting, therefore, is a celebration. The last African summit held in southern Africa was in Zambia 25 years ago.

We have placed a great deal of emphasis on economic issues. It is the first OAU summit which will become the Assembly of the Heads of State of the African Community. We will discuss economic issues and the role of regional cooperation. We shall see what can be done to enhance the regional economic groupings, and what can be done to promote economic cooperation in Africa, while also keeping in mind the international economic situation and economic liberalisation in Africa.

Also on our agenda will be the issue of Africa's debt, which now totals over $300 billion. This is a colossal amount for many African countries, and we have made clear that there must be debt relief if Africa is to make effective use of its economic and political reforms. The best option is debt forgiveness. It's actually the solution.

The question of conflicts in the continent must be discussed. Africa has witnessed various phases, in the sense that we have seen an improvement, for example, in the situation in Liberia. Building on this, the next question is how can the OAU reinforce the [reform] efforts made by the countries of the region. We're beginning to see some hope — some movement — as in the case of Somalia. The changes may not be too substantial, but they encourage hope. I think that we've got to encourage that whole process which is trying to bring the Somali leaders together. The Somali seat [in the OAU] will remain vacant until a government is formed in Somalia.

We will also discuss the situation in Burundi, where we notice some developments have begun to take place between the government and the opposition.

Will Congolese President Laurent Désiré Kabila be attending the OAU meeting?

I don't know. As the country's new head-of-state, he has been invited. We do, however, expect that the new administration will be represented.

What about the Lockerbie affair and the Palestinian issue?

Our position with regard to the Lockerbie issue will not change from the one we laid down previously. We believe that the Libyan government has really made great efforts to address the concerns of the international community, and we support the flexibility demonstrated by the Libyans. They have accepted the proposals made by both the Arab League and the OAU.

We believe that the continuation of sanctions against Libya are not justified from the African viewpoint. We think the sanctions harm Libyan people, as well as the peoples of the region, and we would like to see a genuine resolution of the conflict. However, we have condemned the bombing of the Pan Am plane over Lockerbie. We condemn terrorism.

What is the OAU's view of the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process? Would African countries re-evaluate their relations with Israel in response to the latest measures taken by the Israeli prime minister on the settlement issue?

We have welcomed the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, and believe very strongly that it is the only way to move forward. And like the rest of the international community, we have been clearly disappointed by some of the unilateral measures taken by the Israeli authorities. We don't believe that these measures will help the peace process. We are, however, encouraged by the efforts now being made by President Mubarak.

Africa's solidarity with the Palestinian people and their cause is clear. We look forward to having Chairman Arafat attend [the summit] and will listen carefully to his presentation.

Do you think the African countries should now give Israel a signal of their discontent?

I think that depends on how the situation develops. It is still too early for African countries to contemplate something of that sort. Frankly, what we are mainly concerned with now is to impress on Israel the need to abide by the Oslo agreement.

We must stress the need to avoid unilateral measures, particularly in sensitive matters such as Jerusalem which, as you know, is a delicate issue for the Jews, Muslims and Christians. It is a holy place, and I think a solution should be reached in such a way as to accommodate the concerns of all the parties. Any sort of unilateralism will not help.

You're running for a third term as secretary-general of the OAU. Does this mean that you're happy with the organisation and what it has achieved until now? Is there any real competition for the post between you and the other candidates, such as Côte d'Ivoire's foreign minister, Amara Issa?

My candidacy is the best for a number of reasons. First, I've been encouraged by our consultations with many leaders who believe that we have been trying to do our best for the OAU. Second, I believe in some of the things we have been doing — be it in the area of conflict management, the question of economic integration, or the question of our continental stability and security.

We have started something, and I believe it's time we should be able to consolidate those achievements.

I also believe that we have been able to give our organisation tremendous credibility in the eyes of the world. This is essentially because of the seriousness shown by the African leaders themselves.

I am privileged to have had the opportunity to serve the continent in this way. I have given my total devotion and dedication to the cause of Africa.. So I have a reason to be optimistic. I hope I'll enjoy the overwhelming confidence of African leaders in my bid for re-election.

What about the other candidate?

The Côte d'Ivoire's very distinguished foreign minister, Amara Issa, is a personal friend of mine, and a man I respect immensely. But all things considered, I think that I stand a very good chance of being re-elected.

Is Egypt supporting your re-election?

Egyptians have been always very supportive. You know that President Mubarak was heading the OAU when I first became secretary-general in 1989. I was elected again under his presidency in 1993. I appreciate the firm support I have received from President Mubarak, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and the entire Egyptian diplomatic corps.

What are the main objectives of your up-coming visit to Cairo?

I'm going to Egypt for two reasons. I'm going to call on the president, various officials, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, and to attend a meeting for African ministers of information. We have important decisions to make on issues such as the future of the Pan African News Agency (PANA), and the question of how we envisage Africa's role in the new millennium.

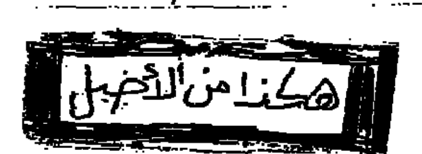
These issues are of tremendous importance to Africa's ministers of information and its media corps. Therefore, I would like to go, not only to speak, but to listen to what the ministers have to say.

Moreover, given that the continent's image is very important, it is imperative that our information network be able to project both the positive and the negative. But currently, Africa's image is not good. It is perceived to be a place where crisis is followed by crisis. This is not true, but unfortunately the image is perpetuated because of lack of information.

People like sensationalistic news about refugees and civil wars. Yes, we are concerned about refugees, and their plight should be given top priority. However, one must also point out that there are positive things taking place on this continent.

What about Afro-Arab Cooperation?

We are looking forward to the meeting that will take place in the United Arab Emirates in December. I've always said that I'm not satisfied with the status of the Afro-Arab cooperation. I believe that there is so much potential that has not yet been effectively utilised.



Chirac's gamble backfires

The French left did far better than expected in snap general elections and Chirac's risky gamble did not pay off, writes Diaa Rashwan

France's Socialist-led opposition confounded opinion pollsters by winning 46 per cent of the national vote and thus upstaging Prime Minister Alain Juppé's ruling centre-right coalition. Juppé has announced that he will step down after the second round no matter the outcome, in a bid to save the centre-right coalition. French President Jacques Chirac's risky gamble of calling a snap general election 10 months ahead of schedule proved to be disastrous for the French right that includes the Rally for the Republic (RPR), the Union for French Democracy (UDF) and the Independent Right. The RPR won just over 15 per cent of the votes; the UDF won just under 15 per cent while the National Front headed by Jean-Marie Le Pen won 15 per cent, giving it considerable scope for influencing the future of the French political scene.

Lionel Jospin, the leader of the Socialists, urged his supporters to step up the struggle to turn the surprise first-round election lead into a second-round victory, form the new *government and stop Juppé's plan* to win a mandate for sweeping free market reforms and more stringent austerity measures to prepare France for the European monetary union. According to Jospin, the outcome of the first round of elections proves that the 40 million-strong French electorate rejects the right-wing austerity measures and budget deficit-cutting reforms.

The second round of the elections is to take place next Sunday. Observers fear that the fascist National Front will score even better in the coming round. Le Pen has been a harsh critic of both Chirac and Juppé. He is against a single European currency, arguing that it sells out French national sovereignty. The Socialists' allies, the Communists, who scored a mere 10 per cent of the vote, are also against the euro. But the Socialists, with 24 per cent of the vote, are more sympathetic to the single currency. In any case, it appears that the ruling right coalition must content itself with a power-sharing arrangement with the Socialists.


Mayor of Bordeaux, Alain Juppé, steps out of the voting booth, and out of the premiership altogether

The French political parties vied with each other in the first round of legislative elections in a climate of unstable political, economic and social conditions. The result of these polls was the outcome of the voters' reaction to a number of related factors which ultimately will determine the features of the French political scene at the close of the century.

Perhaps the major factors to affect the election results were those connected with the French voters' non-participation in the form of absenteeism, the casting of invalid votes and voters' failure to register their names on electorate lists even though they have all the required qualifications. In reality, voter abstention is not specifically a French problem. Over the last three decades, most of the Western democracies have experienced first-hand this ever-increasing trend. In Britain, the absentee rate in the House of Commons elections increased from 16 per cent in 1950 to 23 per cent in 1992. In Germany, absenteeism in the legislative elections rose from nine per cent in 1972 to 22 per cent in 1995.

In France, the absenteeism chart has also drawn an upward curve. In the presidential elections of 1995, absentees represented 20 per cent of the registered voters against 15 per cent in 1964. In the legislative polling of 1993, the figure rose to 31 per cent compared to 23 per cent in 1958. In Sunday's first round, the abstention rate was 32 per cent.

The Arab and Muslim communities of France were the most disinterested electoral group. They are estimated to represent around eight per cent of the electorate, but less than one per cent of them voted.

The impact of such behaviour on the polling results is significant. People who resort to "punitive voting", as this kind of behaviour is called, do so because they are beset by complex economic, social and political problems, or have lost confidence in the traditional political candidates running for election. Accordingly, they resort to either negative measures such as non-registration, non-participation, invalid voting or to positive action, such as vote-casting for some marginal party, or parties representing the extreme right or the extreme left of the political spectrum.

Such behaviour has been attributed also to other reasons, chiefly, a lack of interest on the part of large segments of the population in the political and electoral processes.

In the French elections of the last two decades, the "punitive votes" significantly affected the election results and the overall political map of the country. Economic and social crises, as well as political corruption, have led large sectors of the French electorate to follow one or the other of the negative voting measures. This has ultimately served to consolidate the position of the parties of the extreme right. In the forefront is Le Pen's National Front which obtained 15 per cent of the vote in the latest round of elections, at the expense of the major right and leftist traditional forces.

'We'll be key players'

A top-level British official argues that Britain should stand up and be counted as a player in the Middle East peace process. State Minister Derek Fatchett, on a visit to Cairo, spoke to Gamal Nkrumah

This week, Cairo played host to Derek Fatchett, the Minister of State in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office responsible for Middle Eastern Affairs. This was the first visit to the region by a minister in the new Labour Party government. Fatchett spent two days in Egypt as the first leg of a Middle Eastern tour that will take him to Israel, the Palestinian self-rule territories, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In Cairo, Fatchett met with Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, top Presidential Adviser Osama El-Baz and Secretary-General of the Arab League, Esmat Abdel-Meguid.

Fatchett also met with leading Egyptian businessmen. He expressed delight that bilateral trade has increased by 14 per cent in the past two years. During his term in office, Fatchett hopes to deepen the two-way trade upsurge initiated by the Conservatives in the past *few years.*

Fatchett, however, had no kind words to say about Britain's traditional adversaries in the region. New Labour, he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, will not change its Tory predecessors' policies towards the Middle East. That includes the Tories' policies concerning the so-called "rogue states" of Libya, Iraq and Sudan.

Now is the time for Britain to play a more substantial role in the Middle East, Fatchett impressed on his hosts during his visit to Egypt. "This is the first visit to the Middle East by a minister from the new government in the UK. Egypt is clearly an important regional force and key player in the region; a country with which Britain has got long and strong bilateral relations. So, it is personally pleasing to ensure that my first visit to the region was to Egypt," Fatchett said.

"My purpose is essentially two-fold. One is to bring myself up to date with developments in the Middle East peace process, to find out how people assess the chances of moving out of the current impasse. The position of the British government needs to be re-emphasised because we are a new government. We support the United Nations resolutions; we accept the principle of land for peace and we want to work within the framework of the UN resolutions. We see the peace process as a priority for the Labour government. What happens in the Middle East affects us directly. We have a keen interest and we want to play whatever part we can to ensure that the peace process comes back on track," Fatchett stated.

Having spent 14 years on the opposition benches, Fatchett feels it is time for Britain to have a higher profile in international affairs and that includes the Middle East. As a newcomer, Fatchett sounded keen to appraise the situation in the Middle East. "One of the very fortunate events in the run-up to the general elections was the last debate to take place in the House of Commons before the British general elections. It was a debate on the Middle East. That gave me an opportunity to set out the views of the then-Labour opposition We regard the settlements as illegal. We regard them as the major impediment to peace. Our views have been very clear on the settlement issue," Fatchett explained.

His visit comes at a strategically important moment. "What is required is not politics but an act of statesmanship," Fatchett went on. He expressed interest in "exploring the longer term view of the requirements of the region."

Britain, through its joining of the European Union Troika on 1 July and its subsequent assumption of the presidency on 1 January, stands poised to play a bigger role in Middle Eastern affairs. Fatchett's visit is meant to explore the extent to which "we can use the influence we may bring to bear to ensure the peace and prosperity of the region." He emphasised that Europe is not in competition with the United States. "We are trying to supplement the US," he said.

In the short space of two weeks, the new Labour government has made its mark and wants to use the opportunity of Fatchett's visit to present itself as an honest broker in the Middle East peace process. Fatchett stressed that through its presidency of the EU, Britain is determined to play a more constructive role on the Middle East political scene. "We will be key players," he said.

"We're seen by some as pro-Arab and by others that we're pro-Israeli. It may be that we're just about getting the balance right. I'm delighted that we are seen as both pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli. And that may be a success for us in diplomatic terms," Fatchett said.

Will style make a difference?

Can the new Labour government resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland, asks Doaa El-Bey in London

In its first month in power, the newly-elected Labour government has proved its dedication to swift and radical change in economic and domestic policies. But when it comes to the thorny issue of Northern Ireland, Labour has shown far less resolve to change previous policy.

What Labour has succeeded in doing, however, is injecting some life into the previously-dormant Northern Ireland peace process. Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly indicated his willingness to keep all channels of communication open, and Labour government officials held talks with a Sinn Fein delegation headed by the newly-elected MP Martin McGuinness last week. The talks were described by Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam as "informed and constructive," and she predicted that similar meetings would take place in the future.

Nevertheless, Blair continues to insist that only if the Irish Republican Army (IRA) declares a "clear, credible and unequivocal" cease-fire will Sinn Fein, its political wing, be allowed to take part in all-party talks scheduled for 3 June. In this, and in Blair's refusal to reconsider the basic question of Ulster's union with Britain, there is no change from Conservative policy.

"Blair supports the union [of Britain and Northern Ireland]. There is no change on security issues, or on all-party talks," said Christine Jude, chief press officer at the Northern Ireland Office. Full participation in the all-party talks would obviously be preferable, "but this entirely depends on Sinn Fein and the IRA, not on Blair," she added.

If Labour's Northern Ireland policy has made news, it is perhaps a matter of style rather than substance. Mo Mowlam, the dynamic, informal, forthright, female Northern Ireland secretary impressed even arch-Republicans like Senator Edward Kennedy on a recent visit to the US. She is a great contrast to her predecessor, the stiff-upper lipped Patrick Mayhew.

Stressing Labour's policy of keeping communication channels open and fostering more amicable relations with all parties, Mowlam has toured the province over the past two weeks, meeting representatives from both the catholic and protestant communities.

Sinn Fein's reaction to the new government has so far been lukewarm. McGuinness emerged from the three-hour meeting with Labour officials saying that the elections had brought a change in attitude, but that it was too early to tell if Sinn Fein's differences with Westminster could be resolved. The party came out of the election with a stronger mandate from the voters, in the form of two new MPs. It also triumphed in the local government elections on 23 May 23, emerging as the strongest nationalist party in local government, increasing its share of the vote by 7.4 per cent. This new electoral mandate could lead Sinn Fein to adopt a more hardline position with Westminster, and a possible scuppering of future agreements.

Since Labour's election, Sinn Fein has kept quiet on the subject of a cease-fire. Asked about the possibility of an end to IRA violence, Jim Gibbon, a member of Sinn Fein's national executive, told the *Weekly*: "A cease-fire is a matter for the IRA." It is interesting to note that there have been no IRA terrorist attacks since Labour came to power.

Meanwhile, the Unionists have also seen no "major fundamental change" in government policy, according to Ulster Unionist MP William Ross. The success of talks, he told the *Weekly*, "entirely depends on the IRA giving up violence and putting an end to terrorist policies."

New Labour has demonstrated its disapproval of provocative protestant activities by proposing a law aimed at curbing the confrontations that often occur during the traditional protestant marching season. Under the new law, marchers would have to give 21 days notice of a march, and its route, and alcohol would be banned at marches.



Not by goodwill alone

The talks between President Mubarak and Prime Minister Netanyahu seem to have injected the hope of new life into the long-stalled peace process. Both leaders agree that the meeting, *if not entirely successful* in breaking the deadlock, was, at least, as Netanyahu said, "not a failure".

But for both Egypt and the Palestinians this is a far cry from getting the peace process back on track. By Israel's own admission, freezing the settlement construction in Jebel Abu Ghneim is not an option that is on the table.

The meeting did allow Mubarak to highlight Palestinian concerns — once again. And once again, the Israeli premier has affirmed his willingness to pursue peace, so long as Palestinian demands are not viewed as absolute preconditions to the resumption of the negotiations. Good will, however, as Foreign Minister Amr Moussa stated, will not be enough to bring about a resumption of negotiations between the two parties. And, since the Netanyahu administration has yet to proffer anything but statements of the best intentions, then it seems unlikely that the talks will resume under this hollow framework.

Following the meeting, Mubarak's chief political adviser, Osama El-Baz, headed off to Gaza to brief Arafat on the content and outcome of the talks. Netanyahu may also be hoping that somewhere, nestled discretely in this briefing, will be a nudge that will bring the Palestinians back to the negotiating table. Expecting this would be a miscalculation. Egypt, though more than willing to play a key role in brokering peace between the two parties, *neither can nor would prompt the Palestinians* to accept "concessions" that are clearly not in the interest of realising a just and comprehensive peace.

This means that Netanyahu has but one option if his statements of goodwill are to become good deeds. He must first realise that Egypt is an intermediary, and moreover, is one that has no interest or desire to pressure the Palestinians to accept an imposed solution that violates their fundamental rights, including, first and foremost, their right to self-determination and *independent* statehood.

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Solomon's solution

The 1947 partition plan may be the only way of saving Palestine, writes **Amin Hewedy**

Within Israel's arsenal are a few explosive problems which it has chosen to defuse in its own manner. It may also postpone *the resolution of* some of these problems until it decides to put them to use in obtaining delays or linking them to its other exigencies. The issues with which Israel chooses not to deal, on the other hand, are swept under the carpet and eventually forgotten. Alternatively, it resorts to placing the issue on the *multilateral negotiations table, which it is able to* control by monitoring bilateral talks. Israel, however, may always decide to pull a new problem out of a hat, as has been the case with the current crisis. Jerusalem was to be dealt with negotiations during the final phase, as stipulated in the Oslo A ccords. But Israel decided to impose a *new status quo, thus preempting the talks* to be held three or four years hence. By the time the final-status issues are on the table, Israel may refuse dialogue, or impose discussions of a "new Jerusalem", with new features and new inhabitants. Meanwhile, it will refuse to discuss the Palestinians expelled from their homes, or the refugees — two issues which constitute something of an "Arab time bomb".

The problem of the Palestinian refugees started before the 1948 War, not because of it. The Zionists massacred the inhabitants of villages throughout Palestine in order to spread terror as widely as possible, force survivors to flee in panic, leaving their homes and possessions behind, and eradicate entire communities.

To rationalise the atrocity of these crimes, the Israelis attempted to establish a causal link between the massacre of the Palestinians and the attack by five Arab armies against Israel on 5 May 1948. The Israeli government alleged that the *Palestinians left Palestine for fear of the Israeli* army's reaction to the attack, while the Jews supposedly *implored* them to remain. According to these allegations, the Arabs' flight cannot be called "expulsion". Simultaneously, Israeli historiography holds that the departure was a temporary measure, and that the Palestinians would soon return. Lived experience and documents unquestionably confirm the fact that these allegations are *lies*, pure and *simple*.

The international community dealt with this tragic situation early on. The UN General Assembly issued Resolution 194 on 11 December 1948. Article 11 of the resolution stipulated that "the refugees desiring to return to their homes to live in peace with their neighbours shall be allowed to do so as soon as possible. *Compensation* for their property or for the injuries they sustained shall be paid to those who choose not to return."

Israel's intentions, however, were made quite clear during the negotiations in Lausanne in 1949. According to the memorandum submitted then by Israel, "it is impossible to turn back the hands of the clock. The return of any Palestinian *refugees is also impossible.* Their homes and jobs are now occupied. The mode of life they were used to and the old economic system have disappeared." Israel later issued "the law of return", which established the right of all Jews from any part of the world to "return" to their national homeland. On arrival, they are immediately *granted nationality, permanent residence,* and accommodations.

The Palestinian refugees left behind possessions worth one billion dollars, the present value of which is the equivalent of $6 billion, according *to an official Israeli document published* on 18 April 1997 by *Ha'aretz*. Today, the statistics issued by UNRWA estimate that there are 3.4 million refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The refugees wake up every day not knowing what the future holds for them. Their standard of living has dropped by 35-38 per cent since the beginning of the peace process, according to the High Commissioner of UNRWA *in a statement to Al-Hayat on* 5 May 1997. Israel does not regard this continuing crisis, with its political and human dimensions, as a real problem. It regards it as one of the many problems that followed in the wake of the second World War, a conflagration which created 50 million refugees of different nationalities, who were then absorbed *in many different countries.*

Shimon Peres, an Israeli "dove", regards the refugee problem as pertaining first and foremost to the Jews: "We are a nation of refugees banished from the land of their forefathers..." According to this warped logic, the Arabs are required to absorb the refugees in the same brotherly spirit as Israel demonstrated toward the Jews who migrated there. In this perspective, the Palestinians will never have the right to return, because this will destroy the national character of Israel.

Some, including Netanyahu, maintain that, until the Mandate, only two national groups existed: the Jews and the Arabs. Then there were only two states: Jordan and Israel. The latter now has an Arab minority. There can be no room for a third entity in the region. Its presence would be im*posed at Israel's expense.* Therefore, the Arabs are not entitled to demand that the construction of *settlements be frozen and the colonisation of* Palestinian land put to an end. The same logic applies to Arab demands that the expansion of ex*isting settlements be frozen.* This would mean the end of these settlements, for nobody would accept to live in an area where services and housing do not expand in response to the "natural" increase of the population. Therefore, Israel must retain the right to exercise demographic control in these regions.

Israel is also establishing enclaves of Jews throughout and between the self-rule areas. These zones will transform the Arab regions into islands completely cut off by belt-ways that allow communication between Jewish sectors while making it unnecessary to pass through PNA-controlled territory.

As for the refugees abroad, the *Israeli* government refuses categorically to recognise their right *to return. They must remain* wherever they are. The current strategy for the relief of refugees must be abandoned and "rehabilitation" contemplated instead. There is no room for them in their homeland; the influx of Jewish immigrants from all over the world continues. US funds allow them to live in a land that is not theirs.

I believe that the only way to ensure Israel's security is to return to the UN partition plan of 1947. This will enable the creation of an area populated solely by Jews. This entails a major sacrifice on the part of the Palestinians, but it will achieve stability in the region. Although the *partition plan will divide Palestine, this is better than standing* by as it is chopped up into patchwork squares. Israel's absurd policy will bring *about neither security nor justice, not to mention* peace.

The writer is a former defence minister and former chief of intelligence.

Is June '67 still haunting us?

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Six-Day War, **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** discusses whether 1967 helped develop a movement towards peace or produced just the opposite

What if the '67 war had not broken out and Israel had not occupied Arab territory five times the size of its own? Was the defeat unavoidable? What would have happened if the war could have been averted? *Of course, it can be* argued that the war was not a fatality, *that history could have taken other* paths, that many contingent factors contributed to the Arab defeat, and that attributing defeat to fatalities alone or contingencies alone only raises questions that have no definite answers.

The land-for-peace tradeoff is today accepted as the basis for any solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. What if Israel had not occupied wide chunks of Arab land that are exchangeable for peace? *Would peace never have oc*curred? Could the Arabs have continued to boycott Israel and isolate it from its Middle East environment indefinitely? If the outcome of the '67 war was not a 'necessity', why should the land-for-peace tradeoff it generated be regarded as such?

Before answering this crucial question, let us probe two possible interpretations of the '67 war we might be tempted to adopt, *because both help ex*onerate us from blame for the defeat. One *interpretation* is to assume that Israel's crushing victory was unavoidable. It will be remembered that, up to the actual breakout of the war, the Arab parties were convinced they would be victorious in any military confrontation with Israel. This made their defeat when *it* came *all* the more bitter. Worse it induced many Arabs *into believing* they were the *victims of* an elaborate plot. The propensity among Arab intellectuals to adopt a conspiratorial interpretation of history does not help mobilise the necessary forces to overcome any setback, let alone a tragedy of the magnitude of 1967.

Another interpretation is to attribute the defeat to an aggregate of contingent factors, to a series of accidents, and this also is not credible. Any thorough investigation of the event requires that we assume our share of *blame, without trying to shirk our re*sponsibility. And this raises a very es*sential question: if the defeat had not* been so devastating, if the war had ended in neither defeat nor victory, if it had not been a major event in history, would the circumstances have been more, or less, favourable for overcoming the historical dispute and proceeding forward towards the future?

The military confrontation which preceded the '67 one in the Arab-Israeli conflict was the Suez War of *1956, where France and Britain stood* on Israel's side, while both the United States and the Soviet Union stood against the 'tripartite aggression'. Dwight D. Eisenhower, then US president, believed the time had come for the United States to inherit the role traditionally assumed by the European colonial powers, as leader of the Western Alliance. He sought to fill the vacuum in the Middle East generated by *the Suez fiasco through what came to* be known as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

The Soviet Union, for its part, had at more or less the same time replaced Stalin's motto of 'whoever is not part of the Socialist camp is against us" with Khrushchev's motto of "whoever is against imperialism and colonialism is with us". But after the Cuban missile *crisis in 1963, the picture changed.* When the '67 war broke out, the con*frontation which held centre stage was* not between colonialism and neo-colonialism, but between the Soviet Union, which backed the Arab liberation movements, on one side, and the United States, which strongly supported Israel, on the other.

It is true that, in 1956, Israel signed a secret agreement with France under the terms of which Israel took part in the Suez adventure in exchange for France's undertaking to set up Israel's nuclear weapons industry. But it is the United States that has ever since guaranteed Israel's continued *military* superiority over all the Arab states combined.

If their defeat in the '67 war forced the Arab states to recognise Israel, it was not because they had finally come to terms with its existence in their midst, but because this was the only way they could hope to restitute their occupied territories. At the same time, the '67 defeat brought to the fore a particularly important aspect of the conflict which had hitherto been downgraded, namely, the Palestinian *problem. The new prominence* acquired by the Palestinian dimension was instrumental in bringing about a deal whereby in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel, the latter would recognise an Arab Palestinian state along the lines of the partition plan proposed in 1947, even before the state of Israel existed, by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

It should be remembered that the *years which followed the* '67 war witnessed the upsurge and radicalisation *of many Third World liberation move*ments. Before the war, the epicentre was Cuba, a few hundred kilometres away from the most powerful capitalist power on earth. No wonder Che Guevara became a legendary figure worldwide. But after his assassination in Bolivia, the epicentre passed to the Palestinian movement. However, in *the recent decades the movement's* mystique has waned, especially with the promotion of 'globalism' which tends to denigrate national liberation movements and regard them as breeding grounds for terrorism.

One should remember, however, that the 'land-for-peace' tradeoff established as the basis for the Middle East peace process is an arbitrary, not to say illusory, solution. If the parties all cling to this formula, it is only because no better formula has been devised. However, Resolution 242, which *stands at the origin of the formula, has* been marred by deep ambiguities from *the start, most famously* by the ambiguity surrounding exactly what territories Israel is supposed to withdraw from: whether the word 'territories' as used in the resolution means all or only some of the territories it occupied in the '67 war.

This formula is not only arbitrary, but is also based on glaring logical fallacies. *Indeed,* what common denominator exists between the two fac*tors of the equation, 'land' and 'peace'*, to make them commensurate and exchangeable? Of what 'land' are we talking when we try to define Israel's configuration? Is it the land lying within the borders established in the UN partition plan of 1947, within the post-'48 war boundaries, within the pre-'67 war boundaries or within the wider borders which result from Israel's "withdrawal from territories" and not from *the territories it occupied in '67? Nor,* for that matter, is it clear what is meant by peace. Are we talking about a simple armistice along the lines of that which prevailed after '48, or a peace without diplomatic relations as before '67, or with full normalisation, as now required?

The ambiguities in 242, its reinterpretation by every new *Israeli* government, make the resurgence of war a *possibility that cannot be dismissed.* Hence a solution of the conflict must be devised that would not be a function of the '67 defeat, i.e., in terms of long-term considerations not limited to Israel's continued occupation of Arab territory. We shall devote our next article to investigating some possible scenarios.

United to stand

By Naguib Mahfouz

The future is not bright for the Arab nation. Iraq, suffering under an unbearable embargo, is reduced to begging to feed its children; Sudan is torn apart and deteriorating; Algeria has *turned into* a human slaughterhouse. South Lebanon is occupied by the enemy, and Syria, shackled by Israel's presence in the Golan Heights, is unable to play its role in the Arab world. Finally, the Palestinians suffer under tyranny and are forbidden from creating a state or an identity, while their land is seized and confiscated.

Here in Egypt, we move towards *the 21st century having liberated* our land, achieved stability and worked towards freedom and democracy, progress from which there can be no retreat. We have started on the track of economic reform, which is beginning to bear fruit. We are faced with certain challenges, however, such as terrorism and unemployment and corruption. Still, we have taken important steps *to overcome these obstacles, so that* we can be confident in our future.

Egypt, however, cannot enter the 21st century alone, any more than the Arabs could manage without Egypt — the strength of the Arabs is in their unity. The coming stage is one of regional blocs, such as the European Union and other arrangements in Asia or Latin America.

The Arab nation has received *many bitter lessons from which we* have learned a great deal. If we Arabs have fully grasped this lesson, then we have reason to hope that we will not repeat our mistakes. Otherwise, if we carry on in the same manner, we shall be lost, like so many grains of sand.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

A triumph of *Destiny*

Al-Ahali: "I can now rejoice along with all those who cherish life and the arts. What should we say to Youssef Chahine? Should we congratulate him for the prize he won at the 50th Cannes Film Festival, or should we congratulate ourselves for having an intellectual amongst us whose keen eye exposes the *wounds and tragedies of our nation* and our world? The prize brings much deserved joy to Egypt. Basically, we are for authentic values and noble goals, and Youssef Chahine has upheld these in an artistic style acclaimed by the greatest of film festivals."
(Khaled Mohieddin, 21 May)

Al-Gomhuria: "I was delighted to hear that Youssef Chahine had won the 50th Cannes Film Festival prize, the most prestigious international film festival. The prize crowns Chahine's commitment to ideals that have been *maligned for two decades.* Chahine is *worthy of respect,* love and trust. He is a talented man with a humanitarian mission and he has disciplined himself to bear the hardships of his mission and shoulder its commitments and responsibilities."
(Salah Eissa, 22 May)

Al-Mussawar: "What *Destiny* confirms is that Youssef Chahine has deliberately adopted a tough and bold *stand against terrorism and religious fanaticism,* both Christian and Islamic, and against hypocrisy and treachery. The standing ovation he received from 2,500 spectators after a screening of *Destiny* has elevated Egyptian cinema to a higher international plateau and opened a new chapter in its development."
(Abdel-Nour Khalil, 23 May)

Al-Wafd: "The overwhelming victory which Mohamed Khatami has scored (in Iran's presidential elections) over his powerful rival Nateq-Nouri, is a victory for change over conservatism. From now on, one can assume that Iranian public life will enjoy more liberty, openness and *respect for human rights: these are the* slogans raised by Khatami in the presidential campaign *which have found support* among many sections of the Iranian public including youth, women, workers, college staff and intellectuals. Those elements and the traditional left, or the 'construction cadres,' will put forward new ideas concerning privatisation and will confront the bazaar merchants' monopoly on power and the economy."
(Gamal Badawi, 25 May)

October: "We are now faced with the fact that Israel intends to go ahead with organised land usurpation in order to become Eretz Israel at the expense of the Arabs. The other fact is that the US supports this policy with money and arms. It helps with aid, donations and loans to build these settlements. We will never forget this US role. *And if the US has managed to buy the silence of the Arabs* at present, it will not be able to do so in 10 or 20 years.
(Editorial, 25 May)

Al-Ahram: "Khatami is highly cultured and intelligent. He is talented and has his own ideas about reforms. Moreover, he is a new face who has emerged from the heart of the regime, although not nominated by it. He has concentrated, in his campaign, on the topics of the hour, such as public liberties, freedom of expression, the right to self-determination and the accountability of rulers. He promised a *programme of what he calls political* development. Impartial observers see the Iranian regime as a stable one under which the people have begun to dream about change, openness and a better life. Khatami personifies all this as well as the aspirations of a new generation of youth, women and intellectuals."
(Ahmed Bahgat, 26 May)

Al-Arabi: "We hope that Arafat now realises the truth *about all we said about Oslo. We hope that he understands* the extent to which he has been deceived and the magnitude of the catastrophe that has befallen the struggle of the Palestinian people as a result of their dependence on US and Israeli pledges. Concessions were made in exchange for pledges, and the pledges proved worthless. The US-Israeli strategy is based on might, not right. This strategy expects the Arabs to kowtow Israel, its superiority and security needs."
(Galal Aref, 26 May)

Rose El-Youssef: "The entire nation should hail and honour Youssef Chahine. We have no patience for the motley of saboteurs who undermine our stability, dismiss our victories, conspire with our enemies, distort our achievements and tarnish our reputation. We must make a stand against those people and bring them back to their senses... Just before they start their dirty war tactics against Chahine's *Destiny*, these murderers should know that their actions will not go unpunished, not any more."
(Abdalla Imam, 26 May)

Compiled by ***Hala Saqr***



The face of new Iranian President Mohamed Khatami expresses optimism and enlightenment in every feature. The black turban of the *sayyid* (descendant of the Prophet Mohamed) crowns a broad forehead, eyes crinkled in a jovial smile, and white teeth framed by the sweeping lines of his carefully groomed beard. Does his optimism arise from *Khatami's visions of the future,* and the democratic system with which this former minister of culture may replace the rule of Iran's conservative clerics? Only the future will tell.



United to stand
By Naguib Mahfouz

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Even in Iran

Even Iran, it seems, can hold free elections when the voters' choice is respected. And even in Iran, despite all the criticism of the Islamic Republic and the regimes brought to power in the wake of the revolution, it is possible for the conservative candidate of the ruling clerical establishment to be defeated, and it is also possible for another, more liberal candidate to be elected as president. This occurred even though Khatemi was not backed by the religious and intellectual circles that have held Iranian political life in a stranglehold ever since the Khomeni revolution.

It was with considerable interest that the world followed the Iranian elections for a successor to the powerful Ali Akbar Rafsanjani when his mandate came to an end. Interest was all the keener because Rafsanjani represented an element of stability and moderation against the ultra-conservative religious forces under the leadership of the Imam Ali Khamenei.

Although the religious establishment explicitly backed its official candidate, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, head of the Shura Council, who therefore enjoyed the full support of both clergy and state, he lost to the former minister of culture, a religious moderate. Khatemi, moreover, is not close to the conservative centre of power that has dominated ever since the Revolution.

Most informed observers note that, while only four candidates ran for the presidency, having received the approval of the Council of Guardians, out of a total of 278 would-be candidates, it was a competitive election characterised by the lack of any state intervention — this despite the fact that the religious and political establishment supported Nateq-Nouri. The overwhelming majority of voters in favour of Mohamed Khatemi, furthermore, left no doubt concerning the regularity of the electoral process.

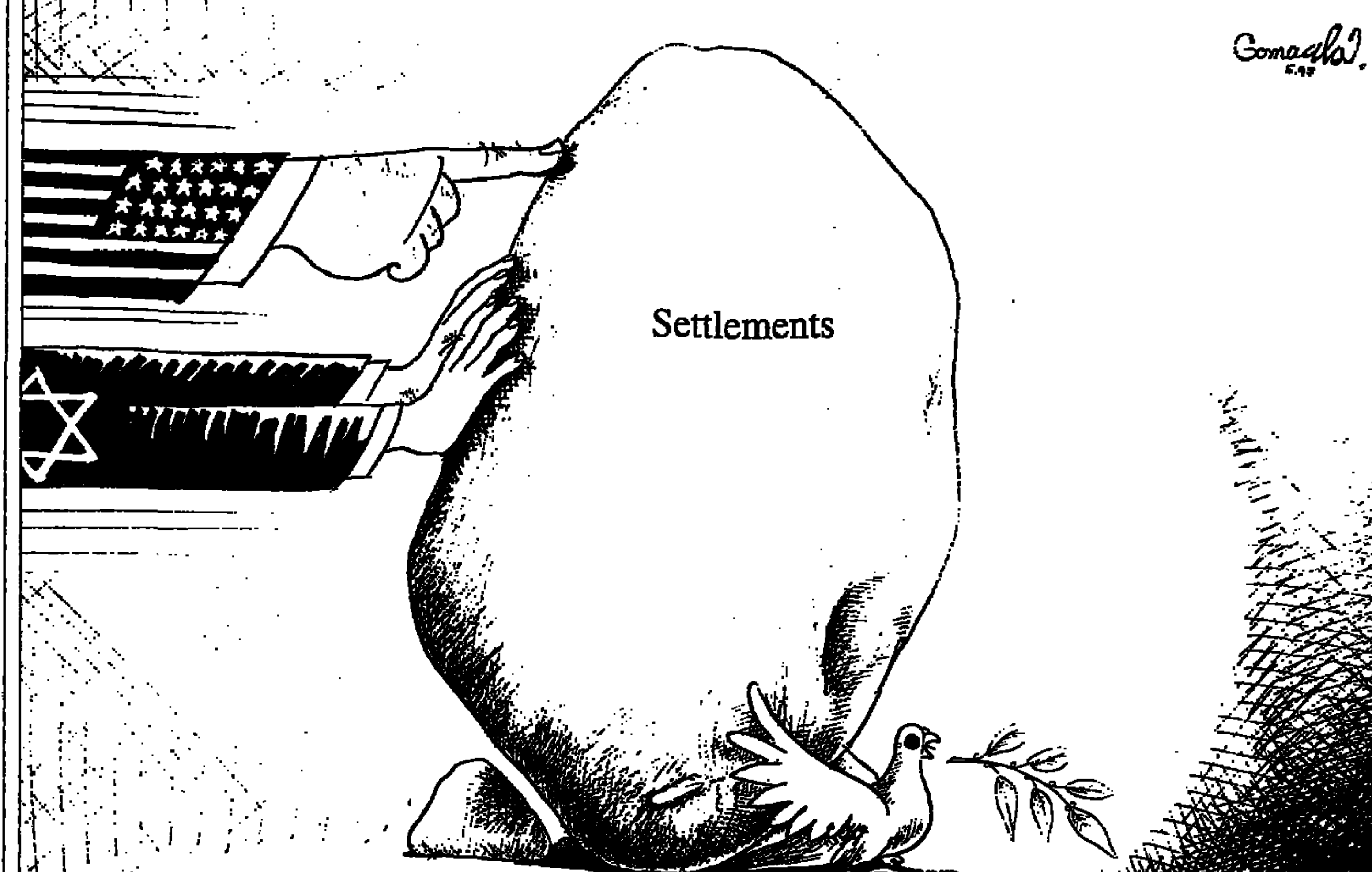
The outcome, at any rate, opens the door to a number of questions regarding possible changes in Iranian policy. A closer look at the result indicates that, since the '80s, Khatemi has been the representative of a more liberal and moderate trend — a stand which cost him his ministerial post. This trend was very apparent during the electoral campaign, when he called for Iran's acceptance within the international community and the improvement of its foreign relations, as well as its ties with neighbouring states, goals he said could be achieved by adopting more flexible policies. He also called for the careful liberalisation of the Iranian economy, greater concern for the problems of young people, acknowledgement of their role in the community, women's right to equality in the community and the possibility of women acceding to ministerial posts.

It is no surprise that this platform brought in the votes of young people, women and businessmen, while the bazaar and the clergy voted for his opponent. Evidently, Iranian political life, during the years since the revolution, has witnessed the birth of mass youth and women's movements which are on the verge of changing the face of Iranian society. It is said that two of Khatemi's main supporters were women belonging to prominent clerical families — Dr Zahraa Mustafawi, the daughter of Imam Khamenei, and Faiza Rafsanjani, the daughter of former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani.

The success of the moderate trend as represented by Khatemi does not necessarily mean the decline of the conservative and ultra-right religious trend; rather, it indicates continued stability and a more moderate foreign policy. It might also herald the end of the confrontational moves which have characterised Iranian foreign policy for many years and which were about to cost Iran its few remaining allies in Europe. The emergence of strong youth and women's movements indicates that the problems of large sections of Iranian society must be grasped and managed more effectively by the conservative clerical establishment.

It is of prime importance that the moderate trend represented by the new Iranian president guide his policy with regard to the Gulf and the Arab world, in accordance with existing common interests and a shared cultural heritage.

The Iranian elections thus represent a mature example of political development in line with desirable standards of democracy and freedom — the like of which is to be hoped for in the Arab world.



Soapbox

Equal partners

The experiences of Arab non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in different parts of the world illustrate the difference between the role of NGOs in well-established socio-economic and political systems (developed societies of the north), and in societies still working toward social, economic and political liberation and trying to achieve independent development. In the latter, NGOs can play a vital role in the processes of social change and liberation. In Arab societies, where independent and comprehensive development remains a major challenge, NGOs are expected to play a structural role as mechanisms for mobilising and organising citizens for effective participation with the government in the development processes.

Arab NGOs, as integral parts of their societies, are subject to the processes of globalisation which aim at integrating all world societies in the world economy. The negative impact of these processes is due to the unequal power relations which benefit the Western countries.

Arab NGOs are undergoing the globalisation process through their interaction with foreign institutions and international NGOs. In assisting Arab NGOs, and in accordance with international economic and political programmes, non-Arab NGOs concentrate on speeding up privatisation, reducing the role of the state and promoting NGOs with Western/liberal economic, political and cultural visions. In addition, there is a tendency towards incorporating Arab NGOs into transnational and international networks led by Western NGOs, in which policies and programmes are formed and transferred to various countries through their NGOs.



This should not be understood as a call for self-isolation, however: it is an invitation for Arab NGOs to empower themselves as social agents for development and liberation, and to insist on globalising as equal partners.

This week's Soapbox speaker is a researcher and consultant in the political economy of development.

Shahida El-Baz

The sacred and the profane

There is only one villain in stories of economic failure, writes **Galal Amin**, but, like Satan, it wears many guises. Armed with a new dogma, the structural adjustment clergy are intent on exorcism

There are few things more ugly than religious hypocrisy, the use of religious discourse to conceal petty and selfish motives. A little less ugly but also objectionable is using religious rhetoric when talking about worldly subjects and displaying piety towards things that are far from sacred. But the more one reads the economic reports produced by various UN institutions, and listens to speeches given by their representatives on such subjects as the Free Market System, Free Trade, Structural Adjustment, Economic Liberalisation, etc., the stronger the impression that something very much like religious discourse is being used in dealing with subjects that belong to a completely different domain.

One would have thought, for example, that such issues as privatisation, trade liberalisation, planning or the optimum degree of government intervention, have nothing "absolute" about them, and that the right policy or mixture of policies must vary from time to time and from country to country. The extent of public ownership that is good for Sri Lanka is surely different from that which is good for Mexico and Egypt. Increased public expenditure on education may be needed in Kenya more than in Egypt. Examples abound. But reading the reports of those institutions and listening to their representatives give one the impression that the smaller the role of government the better, in all areas of economic and social life, in all countries, at all times.

It is amazing, to the point of being almost comical, how all economic failures, irrespective of which country one is talking about and what epoch of history, are invariably attributed to "excessive government intervention." There is only one villain in all stories of economic failure, although, like Satan, it may disguise itself in different forms. Like false religious discourse, these economic reports and speeches can indeed be the source of the utmost boredom, since they have only one thing to say and, once you know the name of the institution which produces them, you can be absolutely sure of what you are going to read or hear.

But again, like false religious discourse, only those facts that support their argument are mentioned; all the rest are suppressed or ignored. Serious editing is therefore absolutely necessary before such reports are published, and there is a special language which one has to master if one is to be allowed to join the inner circle.

One can talk freely, for example, about how the reduction of government expenditure has brought about a reduction in budget deficit and the rate of inflation, but one must avoid any reference to the impact of such a reduction on the quality of education and health services or, of course, on the rate of unemployment. When forced by suspicious critics and unbelievers to talk about such subjects, the spokespeople of these institutions invariably invoke "the long run". As is the case for Judgment Day, no one knows exactly when the long run arrives, or even the precise nature of the forces that bring it about. You are repeatedly advised to be "patient", not to expect the reward for your good deeds to be reaped immediately; but you are also never to lose faith that the reward will be reaped eventually.

In scientific discourse, one is not supposed to make a statement when there is no way of proving it false. If there is no way of showing a statement to be false, this is the surest evidence that it is "unscientific". But nothing appears more frequently in the reports of these institutions than this kind of statement. If predictions of economic improvement are not fulfilled, any amount of factors could be responsible, provided that the blame is not laid at the door of economic liberalisation.

The reason for the failure of this or that prediction may be an unfortunate change in climate causing a crop failure, or it may be an unexpected political event, a war or a global recession. The cause may even be that the measures that made up the recipe for reform were not applied soon or vigorously enough, or with sufficient "faith". But no one knows, of course, exactly what constitutes the right speed, the required degree of vigour or the minimum amount of faith necessary to produce the desired results.

All this must seem surprising, considering the very high calibre of the officials employed by these institutions. They are usually carefully selected from among the best trained economists and other social scientists, who proved their distinction elsewhere before joining these institutions. One would have thought that such qualified and exceptionally bright people would be utterly bored by having to repeat the same arguments in almost identical terms in one report or speech after another. There is no explanation for this other than their complete submission to the faith. Their conversion may have been caused by a variety of factors, but the result is the same: the readiness to abandon all critical faculties for the greater glory of this faith and of the institutions that serve it.

Like most religions, this one also has its "miracles", which are both stunning and beyond normal explanation. One country after another is said to have applied the required measures for reform, and suddenly demonstrates "miraculous" rates of growth and structural transformation. If, after a time, one of these stories proves a little less miraculous than it seemed at first, it is discarded until the setback is conveniently forgotten, and another miracle is announced in its place. Such was the fate of the Brazilian and Mexican miracles. The latest miracle, that of Chile, could very well meet a similar fate.

There is also a domain of life which is conveniently ignored because it sheds serious doubt on the smooth working of economic miracles. The free market may indeed produce some undesirable effects, but these are either termed "externalities", which are very difficult or impossible to quantify, or said to be due to "market imperfections" which do not tarnish the beauty of the "pure" model.

It is never clear, however, why such important matters as poisoning the air, destroying social relations, encouraging crime and elevating the most trivial aspects of culture to the most prominent place in everyday life, are all considered "external" factors ("external" to what, one wonders). Why is it taken for granted that what is quantifiable is always more important that what is not? Why should one be more concerned with the implications of the "pure" model of free market forces than with what actually takes place in the real world?

As with people of the same religious faith, the officials of these international institutions have the ability to immediately recognise whom, among the people they meet, shares their faith and who does not. This is made easy by the arsenal of terms that are coined and circulated through their reports, but also by the fact that they do not accept any qualification or any trace of scepticism. You make yourself suspect by showing too much concern for certain things like unemployment or income distribution, but you are completely welcome if your concerns revolve around tax rates or GDP growth or the budget deficit. One is reminded of orthodox Marxists, especially in the 1950s and '60s, whose bywords included any reference to the necessity of thinking "dialectically", or of recognising the impact of the change in the mode or relations of production on the social superstructure. These phrases helped to distinguish friend from foe.

Today, to declare one's adherence to the benign affects of Structural Adjustment, Trade Liberalisation and Privatisation is almost enough to make one an "ally", while any expression of doubt that wholesale privatisation may not be all that desirable immediately excludes one from the ranks of believers. Any suggestion that some measure of protection may be a good thing has the same result. The degree of intolerance is remarkable, and especially amazing in people who pride themselves on being so scientific in spirit and so fond of proving their arguments statistically and mathematically.

It is taken for granted, for instance, that the fall of the Soviet Union was due to its complete disregard for market forces and the principles of free enterprise and free trade, and to its adoption of comprehensive planning. How could one dare utter a different view nowadays, especially as the collapse was officially announced as "The End of History"? All sorts of reasonable grounds for doubt are swept out of the domain of possible consideration.

If the Soviet Union collapsed because it did not allow the market to work freely, why did it take more than 60 years to break down? It could also be remarked that, during this period, the Soviet Union was able to transform itself from an underdeveloped country to a superpower by following precisely the "wrong" principles. Supposing that we declare the Soviet economic system a failure since 1917, is there a historical law that states must collapse if they do not adopt the "optimum" economic system?

Is it not quite conceivable that the fall of the Soviet Union was due to factors far more similar to a defeat in war than to mere economic inefficiency? Perhaps the real reason was that the Soviet Union could not spend as much as the US on developing its military capabilities; would that implicate the economic system that brought about this result? What would have happened to another country, applying a free enterprise system but engaged in an arms race with the United States?

Moving on to another group of countries, are we absolutely sure that the recent economic success of some South East Asian countries is due only to the adoption of the free enterprise system? Are we positive that cultural or geographical factors had nothing to do with this success? In fact, are we even sure that all these countries applied this system as religiously as has been suggested?

In fact, their decision to mix liberal economic policies with a certain dose of government intervention may be the more plausible explanation for their success. Whatever the case may be, are we absolutely sure that all other developing countries must apply the same mixture as these South East Asian countries?

Such questions would of course have been much more interesting and refreshing than the same old motto, repeated *ad nauseam*: "private enterprise good, public enterprise bad". But such is our fate, as dictated by the spokesman of this new faith.

The writer is a professor of economics at the American University in Cairo.

To The Editor

Transplant caution

Sir- In *Al-Ahram Weekly* (8-14 May), the writer of "Dispute over defining death" concluded with a testimony against the grain of the rest of the article: Dr Safwat Lutfi's point of view about the transplant of human organs.

This issue is similar to that of nuclear power stations. Both have caused debates in Egypt that do not seem to be settled yet. In Arab history we are taught that Abu Nawwas and Al-Jahiz were found sitting near their tombs after they were believed dead, meaning that, as Dr Lutfi says, there are people who come back to life after their brains are considered to have stopped functioning.

I hope that those in charge will not take a hasty decision and allow the buying and selling of human organs before their owners are dead.

Atef Abdel-Gawad
English teacher

The real culprit

Sir- I read with great interest Salama A. Salama's careful and thoughtful analysis of Egypt's intellectual and cultural life at present (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 15-21 May). I do agree with him that freedom of thought and expression in Egypt is at risk, but I'd like here to trace the real cause of our present impasse.

When ignorance becomes the sole competitor in the cultural arena, when only pedants are there to judge the value of works of art and new ideas, when people with little knowledge claim that they are the only possessors of the truth in this world, then the only culprit we should blame is our *system of education*.

Unfortunately, we teach our young children how to count but we don't teach them what counts. We stuff their memories, but we hardly develop their minds. We may teach them how to make a living, but we never teach them how to make a life. As an educator once said, "The mind is like the stomach. It's not how much you put into it that counts, but how much it digests."

The result of all this is that our educational system has produced a great number of people who are able to read but unable to distinguish what is worthy from what is worthless.

What have we done to reform our educational system so far? We have cancelled the sixth grade in the primary stage (and that was foolish, wasn't it?), introduced new curricula and textbooks, revamped *thanawiya amma*, and spent millions of pounds on training teachers abroad (for what?). But this is like putting a piece of new cloth on an old garment. What we desperately need is a *peristroika*, a sweeping revolution that is capable of setting things right. It is by no means gratifying to say that even advanced countries are dissatisfied with their educational systems. Anyway, are we making the right comparison?

Essam Hanna Wahba
Salam Language School
Assiut

Let El-Gurna live

Sir- I want to thank Nawal Hassan for her article on El-Gurna (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 15-21 May), and to tell her how much I personally agree with her that the village of El-Gurna must be protected.

I have been living in Egypt for two years now and was able to visit Luxor twice only, for a short time. Nevertheless, it was love "at first sight", especially for the West Bank. I was there with friends, Egyptian and foreigners, on a tour (I am from France). But in both cases, the people around me and myself enjoyed very much this special place. Many went back after the temple visits, on their own, for a walk along the foot of the mountain, passing by the different houses to talk with the villagers, drink tea or buy a souvenir (anything, dolls, pebbles, scarves... that was not important). I even know someone who fell down on his way and was taken care of by the inhabitants.

I am a nurse, and when Nawal Hassan wrote of the "right to live", this reminded me of "intensive care" or "emergency". Well, I hope many people will fight for this village's right to live. Besides the architectural and artistic blessings we can find there, especially when you are tired of walking in tombs or temples, in "dead" houses, it's so refreshing to see "Egypt today" among its people.

Beside these blessings, I thought of the consequences if these people are moved to another place, as nice as it may be.

Today, Palestinians' houses are destroyed and we call for new houses of peace, African people are starving or wounded in no man's land, and we call for governments of peace. What is there in El-Gurna today? Isn't it peace? Then let's keep it that way!

Nothing is as painful as losing your land, your "home", the "home" of your fathers. It's often more difficult to forget your home than to forget a relative's death. It is a real bereavment that can last your whole life. I know this because of my parents: they are still grieving over Algeria, which was their "mother land", after 35 years!

Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is so. It's not a simple journey from one place to another, it is an uprooting from the streams of your life to a desert place. At a time when we rescue refugees and blame the destroyers of houses, let's preserve, protect and promote our families' land!

I have too many witnesses of the blessings this village and its inhabitants have to offer for the common tourists. They are the "best souvenir" they will remember, the most precious and personal encounter with Egypt... a cup of tea, a funny doll or a piece of shining stone: these things will have the most worthy place in their house and in their heart.

Let's live! And let's let them live in peace!

Jacqueline Martinez
Heliopolis

Goethe assurances

Sir- We regret that Dr Reine Naggar (Letters to the Editor, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 22-28 May) felt treated without due respect when trying to register for a German course at the Goethe-Institute. What she states about the situation at the gate of our institute is only partly correct. We do have some problems on the days of registration for the new courses, with hundreds of applicants all wishing to enter the institute at the same time. We have been trying to find different solutions to the problem but difficulties will always arise. We shall be grateful for suggestions.

Dr Reine's comparison with the zoo is unacceptable. We kept the gates closed this time, not in order to offend the friends of the German language, but to avoid incidents that occurred on former occasions when our Egyptian employees were physically attacked and hurt by overly enthusiastic would-be students. And like Dr Reine we regret she did not have a video camera with her to document the situation, because then we would have clear evidence about who or what caused a certain inconvenience and who treated whom with disrespect.

Of course we take responsibility for the incident. That's why we invited Dr Reine to discuss it with us and apologised to her — all in vain, unfortunately.

Autumn registrations start in October. We can assure you that the situation will be handled differently and hope that everybody will be satisfied.

Robert Hak
Director of the Language Department
Goethe-Institute
Cairo

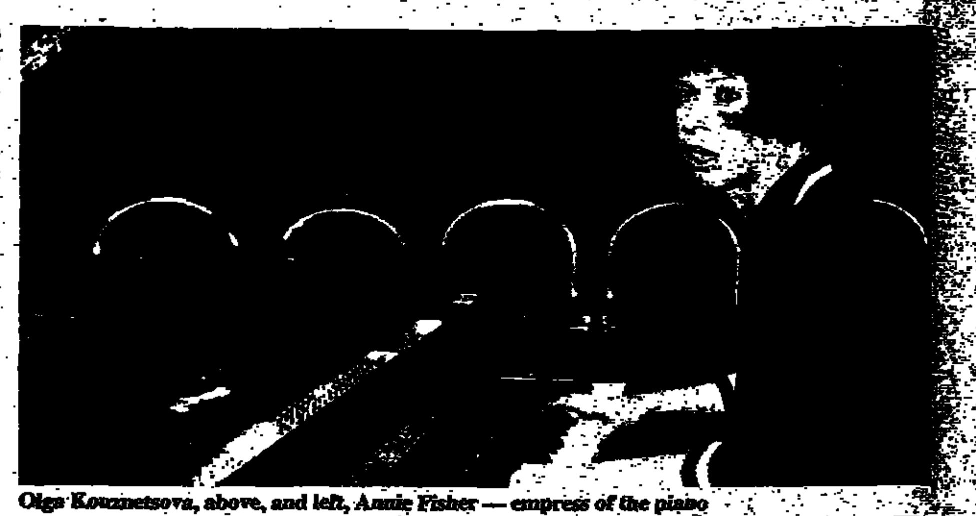


Al-Ahram Weekly

Spelling it out

David Blake on the ABC of it





Olga Kouznetsova, above, and left, Annie Fisher — empress of the piano

Cairo Symphony Orchestra; conductor, Taha Nagui; piano, Olga Kouznetsova; Gomhouria Theatre, 24 May

Piano recitals — this season we have had them all, and most have been welcome. There is nothing to beat a piano except, of course, the player. The Opera House may be short on opera but it is a dazzle dome for pianists. They come from everywhere, no one of them alike, each with the quality of his or her eccentricities.

His or hers? These days, as never before, the piano belongs to everyone. The night of the 24th belonged to Olga Kouznetsova. She has both power and distinction. There is, in short, no one quite like her. The appearance, personality and aura of tension and excitement she projects is hard to equal. Other women, foreign and Egyptian, play the piano here but none of them surpasses Kouznetsova in the almost ragged display of raw emotion, and an atmosphere of narrative splendour. Her performance of Russian music furnishes the Opera House. Born in Odessa, she has a feeling for Russian music that only natives possess. It can be played a thousand ways, though when she plays it there seems to be only one way and it is hers. What is this quality? It cannot easily be described — perhaps it is best to call it Russian — and Kouznetsova's performances, in the Russian style, are perfect.

Rachmaninov's second piano concerto, composed almost at the start of the twentieth century, marked the beginnings of the earthquake that was to hit European piano music. Rachmaninov was himself god-like in his pianistic endowments, possessed of strength, power and prodigiously large hands about which there was nothing fleshy. Everything about his music calls for a certain class of player — athletic and aggressive. He has left recordings of how he played and many, still living, remember his performances. It used to be said that players would pray for 20 fingers and a stretch as wide as Rachmaninov's.

What of the content of the music? It is the sound of fury and collapse. The Russian was a seer, like Mahler. The music had huge influence on not only the player but the instrument itself. The piano before Rachmaninov was positively 18th century. It was a delicate instrument, for which Mozart wrote. Mozart also wrote for women. By 1901, the year of the second concerto, the Steinways were producing their instruments. Pianos everywhere grew to enormous proportions until today they stand on the concert platform, giants whose metal frames alone weigh 18 tons, a weight necessary to sustain the enormous tension of the strings. Full out, a piano can silence a philharmonic orchestra though it can be made to whisper like a cat. The piano — it can drive players mad. Even the greatest, Horowitz, got disturbed by its challenge and gave up for decades. It is a sexy instrument, and slides easily into pop or salon. So the challenge of a Rachmaninov concerto is an event and so it was for Kouznetsova.

She has played big Tchaikovsky with unforgettable results. Kouznetsova herself plays and works for the opera as a repititeur and accompanist. It is a hard grind. These players are heroes without glory. Kouznetsova does her slog without a grumble. Yet she is not a stand down type. She is a player suited to the big arena. When Rachmaninov had finished with his four concertos, he had changed not only the quality of the piano but of the player. It was usually men who did the playing. But in spite of the fact that the public thinks of the piano as a male preserve it is not. As the twentieth century unravelled, women players not only entered the scene but began to shine. The awful challenge offered by the piano appears to provide a downhill thrill for women players. They are, it seems, a little less neurotic than men.

Martha Argerich, the Argentinian player, positively relishes danger and strife. Annie Fisher, from Budapest, was an empress of the piano. No one can match her articulation and majesty when things grew too large for mere mortals to attempt. Here in Cairo is Moushira Issa, more thrusting than Cairo's street traffic. Tightened for action, she can be really great, and where men refuse to go she flies over the top regardless. Feats of daring seem to suit women. Marcel Matta is a case. Like the wonderful English player Clifford Curzon, she seems to have a rogue memory that plays her tricks, but as a performer she has tonal grandeur. Women players belong with the great Steinways as much as men.

All these legends fell over one another as Kouznetsova strode onto the stage of the Gomhouria to finally give her version of the Rachmaninov number two. Taha Nagui, hardly suited to the music, did not affect her. Invincible, and trembling with nervous eagerness for the music, she looked bound for victory. It is easy to write of Kouznetsova because there is nothing to criticise about her. One loves her. She has something sheer, wild, untamed but completely articulate about her. She does not even try to fit. She has the highest musical standards, and everything about her fits together. She does resemble one pianist, a Russian, Choura Cherkasky. She has a naiveté that is almost childish, and like a child is painfully direct.

So she is nervous. So is the audience. She, like Cherkasky, can strike wrong notes in her eagerness to hit the tempo on the head. It doesn't matter. Her wrong notes are better than most pianists right ones. Her honesty displays the respect she feels for the listener.

The opening was, from the first moment, disturbing. Her fingers caught the dusky sunset glow. The tunes — everyone knows the tunes but Kouznetsova hears them differently. There are not three movements for her in this work. She sees the thing as a whole. She does not seem to play the tunes, but lets the piano do that. It is fresh, with no slop and go. Like a surgeon she slices the cake, the surface of which could be frosted, and cuts it open to reveal a shattering glimpse of a lost world. These worlds rise and fall, showing what the piano can do when properly manipulated. Her hands flash and strike. Her concentration, as the work continues, is riveting.

She, and the music, break cover and take off, like a great emerald green cormorant perhaps, though certainly something from the sea. The wings flash as the storm approaches and the waves rise. The little Gomhouria had vanished, and Kouznetsova had done her work.

After this manifestation, Taha Nagui's account of Tchaikovsky's first symphony might have been a let down. Maybe the fires of Kouznetsova helped. He took the four movements of the symphony in a vernal, precise way. Sweet, apprehensive and young. To think of what came after number one — career, lifestyle, music — hearing the beginning is a body blow in itself. This was a binocular like view of the beginning of a trip, probably to hell. What a life. Going through the symphonies and the operas and thinking of number one, what heroism. Upside down and without a head, Tchaikovsky had won the battle of life. The gods were kind, and as always, cruel.

Cinema

Prize winners at the Third National Film Festival:
Animation, *El-Asfour El-Kaslan*, dir Reda Gobran; Short Feature, *Tiri Ya Tayara*, dir Hala Khalil; Documentary, *Kamal Abdel-Rahim*, dir Mohamed Kamel El-Qalyoubi; Long Feature, first prize, *El-Qubtan* (pictured), dir Sayed Said; second prize, *Hassan El-Lull*, dir Nader Galal; third prize, *Romantica*, dir Zaki Abdel-Wahab

A necessary outlet

The new generation of film-makers, whose work was shown at the Third National Film Festival, are insistent on the need for change. **Hani Mustafa** assesses the work of the participants

Documentaries and short features have little if any chance of being screened alongside feature films. Hence the importance of events such as the National Film Festival, which in many cases presents the only opportunity for new directors to show their works to the public.

As might be expected, the majority of films screened comprised projects presented in fulfilment of requirements for graduation, or else were first films by debut directors. A number of films, though, did display a maturity that belied the inexperience or age of the directors.

Twilight, directed by Ahmed Maher and awarded a state prize for creativity, is set in Cairo, and follows the nocturnal activities of the inhabitants in one quarter of the city. All the protagonists have occupations that demand they be out at night: Zakariya (Sayed Abdel Karim) is responsible for lighting the street lamps, Nahed (Sawsan Badr) is a prostitute, Karioka (Mohamed Kamel) a street dancer assisted by a young boy, Ali (Meawwad Ismail). Ali, whose trumpet rendition of Sayed Darwish's *Al-Qulal Al-Qinawi* becomes a musical leitmotif, spends much of his time quarreling with Hilmy (Osman Abdel-Moneim), the sergeant, who patrols the district at night and is terrified by the ghosts which supposedly appear near a burned out house in a remote corner of the district.

Twilight eschews any logical time sequence. The film's impetus comes from the many stranded storylines so that at times it seems as if Ahmed Maher, the director, and Dalia El-Nasser, the editor, reformulate the events of the film. The camera focuses on one chain of events, pursuing them to their conclusion, then moves to pursue another event occurring simultaneously with the first. Certain events are shot twice, once from within the house of Nahed, say, and another time from the outside, that is from the perspective of the people on the street or from the roof top. The same shots are taken from various angles to show disparities in viewpoints but are linked by the repetition of sound effects, joining scenes that are shown in autonomous sequences but which occurred at the same time.

The avoidance of conventional chronological sequences, it would appear, is quite the thing to do. *Al-Mawt Yadhak* (Death Laughs), an eleven-minute film directed by Ahmed Abdel-Zaher, begins with a child holding a bird in his hands. The child twists the bird's neck, separating the head from the body, as he shouts "I want to die". Then off we go, to the village canal, where the boy and his friends compete to see who can remain under water the longest. Mohamed, it is established, is contemplating suicide as a reaction to his mother's illness then death. The film does not focus on any other relatives beyond father, mother and son.

The children gather in front of the village canal and Mohamed challenges the child who remained longest under the water. He jumps in while the others begin counting. In a brilliantly contrived sequence the director manipulates the suspense inherent in the potentially suicidal countdown. Finally, the number 70 is reached, and Mohamed emerges from the depths, laughing, to claim his victory. Despite such inspired moments, the film displayed technical naiveté and some sloppy acting.

Tiri Ya Tayara (The Kite), directed by Hala Khalil, deals with a critical period in the life of any girl emerging from childhood to puberty. While adopting a realistic approach to the dilemmas facing the girl, the director allows the camera to linger on details of the street, distractingly so at times since the excessive concern with setting does little to advance the plot and appears, at times, to be irrelevant to the film's dramatic context. The film is, though, remarkably brave and uncompromising in its dissection of the cruelties fathers willingly inflict on their daughters. The switch from the girl's story to that of her maternal aunt, however, provided yet another distraction, layering the film with a little too much portent as it attempted to encompass the plight of all women in the Third World in a fairly thin storyline. The film ends with Fairuz singing *Tiri ya Tayara*, the lyrics of which sum up the plight of both women.

Documentaries at the festival, focused mostly on Egyptian sites, attempted both to inform and promote. *Alexandria 2300* by Kamal Eid (21 minutes) and *Islamic Crafts* by Sayed Marzouk (19 minutes) are typical.

Ma'sat Al-Tannoura (The Tannoura Tragedy) by Mohamed Soleiman (10 minutes) focused on the Tannoura dance show and was shot in Al-Ghoury Cultural Centre. Innovatively lit and photographed, it includes a commentary reminiscent of Sufi verse. This created about the film an almost legendary atmosphere as the camerawork emphasised the rhythmic harmony of the dance and the beat of the music.

Another documentary deserving special mention is Hossam Ali's *Hams Al-Anamel* (Whispering Fingertips), about the Nour wal Amal Association for the Blind. The Nour wal Amal orchestra provides the soundtrack for the film. The highly charged atmosphere is mostly a creation of the soundtrack. The music punctuates the various activities of the association and as Ravel's *Bolero* reaches a crescendo, the screen is dominated by the figure of one of the girls belonging to the association.

(Full length features at the National Film Festival will be reviewed next week.)

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Paul Rinaldi (Drawings, Paintings & Photographs) and Julie Cosh (Paintings)
Ewart Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5436. Daily exc Fri, 9am-9pm. Until 29 May.

Ursula Brosch (Drawings and Paintings)
Cairo Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. Until 29 May.

Hazem El-Mestikawy
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 2pm-9pm. Until 29 May.

Hedayet El-Mallawany (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, corner of Montaza St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 31 May.

Al-Ahram Artists Collective Exhibition
Al-Ahram Bldg, Main Hall, El-Galaa St, Boulaq. Tel 5786100/400. Daily 9am-10pm. Until the end of the month.
Works by Makram Henein, Nagwa El-Ashri, Nagui Kamel and Mohamed El-Nasser.

Group Show
Salama Gallery, 36/A Ahmed Orabi St, Mohandessin. Tel 346 3242. Daily 10am-2.30pm & 5pm-9pm. Until 4 June.

Mounir El-Shaarani (Calligraphy)
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. Until 5 June.

Around The World
French Cultural Centre, Mounira annex, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 5 June.
Seventeen French photographers exhibit 17 impressions of 17 countries.

John Feeney
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 5424. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 5 June.
Architectural photographs.

Frederic Soream (Photographs)
Cairo-Berlin Gallery, *17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. 3-13 June.*

Hamdi Ateya (Paintings)
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 11am-8pm. Until 16 June.

Galal El-Husseiny

Mustafa Nahhas (Paintings)
Donia Gallery, *20 Abdel-Aziz Gawish St, Borg El-Ateba', Bab El-Louk. Tel 355 8367. Daily exc Fri, 12pm-9pm. 1-19 June.*
Works under the title "Gypsies in Egypt".

Suzanne Mubarak Children's Museum
34 Abu Bakr El-Seddiq St, Heliopolis. Tel 249 9915. Daily exc Mon, 9am-2pm.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of Impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the Ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.
A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including *mashrabiya*, lustreware ceramics, textiles, woodwork, coins and manuscripts drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mameluke periods and from other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners. A state of the art museum housing the contemporary art of the state.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956), the Alexandrian aristocrat who is considered one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

La Soif de l'Or
French Cultural Centre, Mounira annex, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. 29 May, 7pm.
Directed by Gerard Oury (1993), starring Christian Clavier and Catherine Jacob.

Kodayu
Japanese Cultural Centre, Japanese Embassy, 106 Qasr El-Aini St, Garden City. 29 May, 6pm.
Directed by Junya Sato (1992).

Lorca, Muerte de Un Poeta
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Adly St, Kodak passage, Downtown. Tel 395 2326. 4 June, 7.30pm.
Directed by Juan Antonio Bardem (1994).

Mike Leigh films
British Council, 192 El-Nil St, Agouza. Tel 303 1514.
29 May, 8pm: **Hard Labour**
30 May, 8pm: **Who's Who**
31 May, 8pm: **Grownups**
2 June, 8pm: **Secrets and Lies**

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Mini Festival
Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

29 May: **Glimmer Man**
30 May: **Independance Day**
31 May: **A Time To Kill**
1 June: **Michael Collins**

King Pin
Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. New Odeon I, 4 Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Starring the idiots Woody Harrelson, Randy Quaid and Vanessa Angel.

Little Indian Big City
New Odeon II, as above. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

Phenomenon
New Odeon III, as above. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

The Juror
Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.
With Demi Moore.

The Hunchback of Notre-Dame
MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
An animated Walt Disney feature adaptation.

Maximum Risk
Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

The Daylight
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Sylvester Stallone.

Jack
Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
El-Horreya II, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Tel 452 9980. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm.
With Robin Williams.

Return of the Jedi
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

A Low Down Dirty Shame
El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
With Keenan Ivory Wayans.

Ghost and the Darkness
Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Michael Douglas and Val Kilmer.

Little Women
Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Tel 452 9980. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm.
With Winona Ryder.

Bekhit Wa Adila II (Bekhit and Adila II)
Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Adel Imam and Sherine.

Emra'a Wa Khamas Regal (A Woman and Five Men)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Fifi Abduh.

Samaka Wa Arba' Qoroush (A Fish and Four Sharks)
Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Jala Fahmi.

DANCE

Don Quixote
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 31 May- 3 June, 9pm.
Performed by the Cairo Opera Ballet Company, directed by Abdel-Moneim Kamel.

MUSIC

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Small Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 29 May, 9pm.
With Polish soloist and conductor Grzegorz Olkiewicz.

National Arabic Music Ensemble
Gomhouria Theatre, Gomhouria Street, Downtown. Tel: 390 7707. 30 May, 9pm.

Music and Dance in Cervantes
Gomhouria Theatre, Gomhouria Street, as above. 30 & 31 May, 9pm.
Dances and songs performed on 16th and 17th century instruments by the Orfeo musical troupe.

THEATRE

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm, Thur 10pm.

Balouza Fil Ballon (Balouza at the Balloon)
Balloon Theatre, Corniche El-Nil, Agouza. Tel 347 1718. Daily 9pm.

Messa' El-Kheir Ya Masr (Good Evening Egypt)
Mohamed Farid Theatre, Emadeddin St. Tel 770 603. Daily 9pm.

Wada'an Ya Bakawat (Farewell, Sirs)
George Abiad Hall, Ezbekiya Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 9pm.

El-Mar'a Allati Tokallem Nafsoha Kathiran (The Woman Who Speaks To Herself Too Much)
Zaki Tolaimat Hall, El-Tali'a Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 937 948. Daily 9pm.

El-Mahzala (The Disgrace)
El-Salam Theatre, Qasr El-Aini St. Tel 355 2484. Daily 9pm.

LECTURES

Poetry Reading
Akhenaten Gallery, 1 Al-Maahad Al-Swissri St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. 3 June, 8pm.
On the occasion of Ref'at Sallam's Arabic translation of a collection of Croatian poetry.

The Role of Egyptian Media in Making Arab-Israeli Peace
Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Development Studies, 17 St no. 12, Mogattam. Tel 506 1617. 3 June, 6pm.
Lecture (in Arabic) by Dr Said Sadek, researcher on conflict resolution and political communication.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064.
Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by ***Injy El-Kashef***

Around the galleries



Hussein El-Gibali

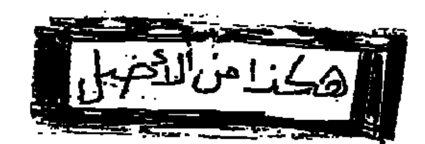
Graceful, intertwining lines, letters and words are characteristic of the calligraphic engravings of **Hussein El-Gibali**, currently on show at the **Sidi Gaber Gallery** in Alexandria. Technically accomplished, they represent the varied stages of the artist's career.

Extra Gallery plays host to paintings by **Hedayat El-Mallawany**. The paint is thickly applied in vibrant colours, resolving into images of the Egyptian countryside, rural houses in particular. All in all the paintings exude a poetic energy.

Abstract, free-form sculptures and vessels by **Youssef Makram** occupy gallery space at the **Centre of Arts**, Zamalek. Organic, subterranean forms are built from unconventional materials.

Emad Ibrahim's colourful and heavily outlined paintings show at the **Atelier du Caire**. Garishly post-impressionist in feel.

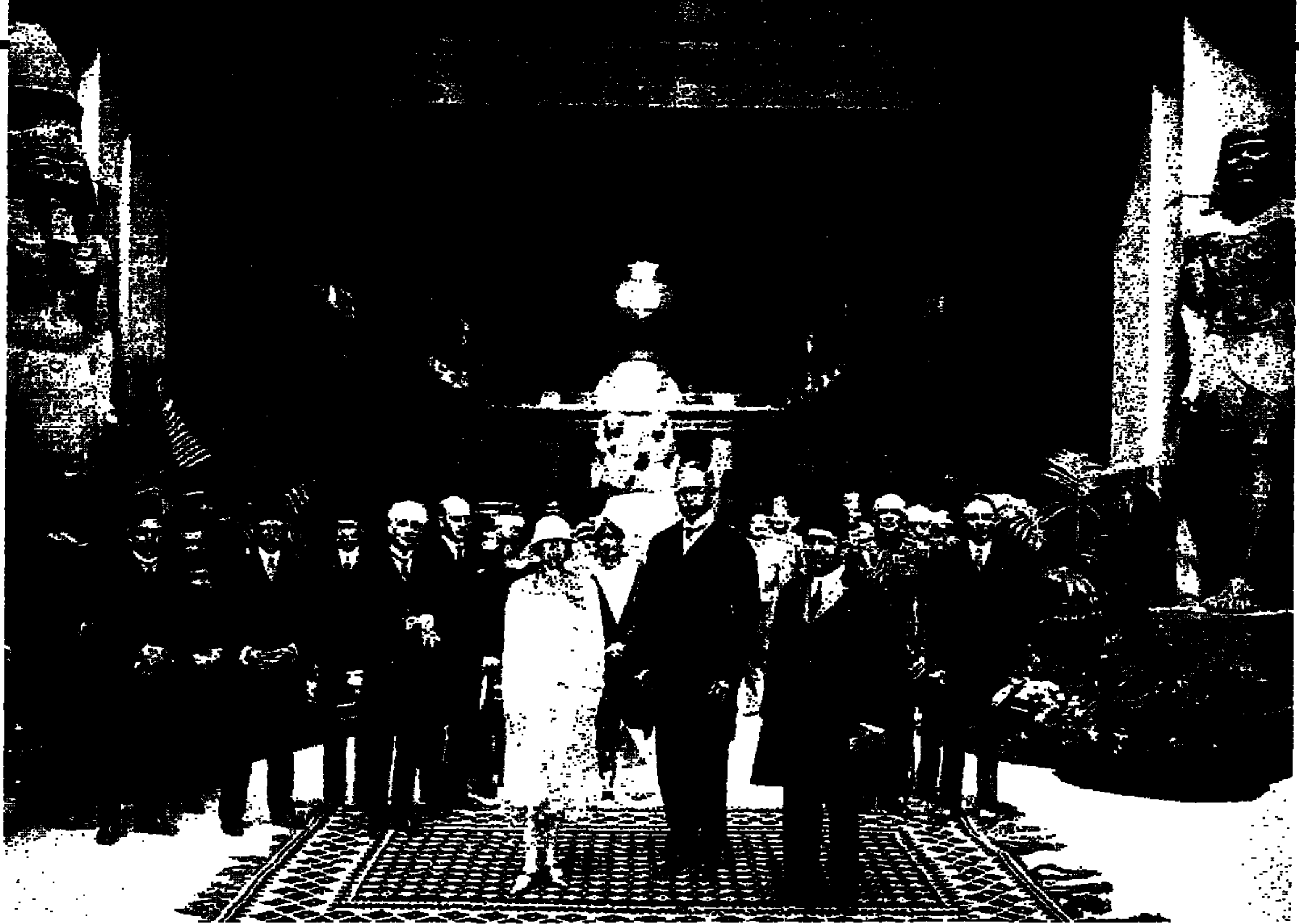
Reviewed by ***Nagwa El-Ashri***



The royalist's revenge

***1952: The Last Protocol*, Max Group Publishing, Cairo 1997**





Top, King Farouk and Queen Farida at the Shoubra Palace, and King Fouad with Albert I and Queen Elizabeth of Belgium at the Egyptian Museum

1952: The Last Protocol, the latest in Maged Farag's collection, the Royal Albums of Egypt, "takes the reader on a pictorial journey through the history of modern Egypt via the rules and regulations of protocol of the Egyptian Royal Courts, with a brief historical background of the events covered by the original Annual Book of Royal Protocol published for the last time on the 11th of May 1952," writes the author in the introduction.

Devised as a crossover between the expensively produced, elegant coffee table book and an extensive family album, this heavy tome, like its predecessors (*1939: The Imperial Wedding* and *1866: The Khedivial Post*), aims to inform and entertain the reader by exploring the intimate details of sometimes little-known areas of Egyptian official history, in this particular instance the rigidly regulated lives of the Egyptian royal family.

"Prior to the reign of HM King Farouk I, there was no recorded legislation for the Office of Protocol," writes Farag. Affairs of protocol were left to specialists "chief of whom was the late Said Zulficar Pasha" who kept no written records. King Farouk commissioned his Grand Chamberlain, Abdel-Latif Talaat Pasha, "to record the rules and compile them in the form of a reference book." A committee was formed comprising HE Sherif Sabri Pasha (Queen Nazli's brother), the Grand Chamberlain, HE Sadek Wahba Pasha (First Chamberlain at Abdin Palace and former minister of agriculture) and Mustafa El-Sadek Bey (former deputy minister of foreign affairs), assisted by a team of experienced palace chamberlains. "The committee compiled rules and regulations of protocol derived from precedents and common practice in the Palace, as well as from international royal customs and traditions." This compilation formed the *Book of Royal Protocol* which became officially mandatory upon the king's approval on 6 May 1946.

More than an account of the historical events spanning a century of monarchy, the book represents an archival, pictorial documentation of events "as they happened", a kind of live reporting on the past. While the central section offers detailed descriptions of all the areas covered by the Egyptian protocol with photographs of official events such as royal audiences, receptions, ceremonies, the inauguration of parliament, official royal visits abroad, royal weddings and funerals, the preamble sets the scene by including short chapters on the royal palaces, the royal carriages as well as a complete genealogy of the Mohamed Ali dynasty and the rules of protocol governing the private life of the household.

The Protocols for Official and Unofficial Visits detail the rules and regulations to be followed for the reception of heads of states and former heads of state, foreign princes and crown princes and special missions. These are accompanied by photographs of the rulers and royalty who came to Egypt on official visits, including the Prince and Princess of Wales, received by the Viceroy of Egypt, Ismail Pasha, on 27 February 1869, King Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan (January 1928), the Belgian sovereigns King Albert and Queen Elizabeth (March 1930), King Victor Emmanuel III, received by King Fouad in February 1933, King Abdel-Aziz Al-Seoud (10 January 1946), President Bishara Khalil Al-Khouri of Lebanon (May 1946), King Abdallah Ibn Al-Hussein of Transjordan (June 1948), and King Mohamed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan (January 1947), who was received by King Farouk.

The protocol of the official inauguration of parliament stipulates that "after the proclamation of the decree fixing the date of the opening of Parliament, the Grand Chamberlain, by agreement with the competent authorities draws up the programme for the inaugural session." In this chapter, Maged Farag takes the reader step by step through a typical inauguration of parliament which includes a complete list of who attended the relevant session, the dress code to be observed (evening dress and decorations for the ladies, uniform and decorations for members of the Diplomatic Corps and Egyptian officials holding ranks and titles, tails and decorations for foreign notables and guests without rank, full dress uniform for military guests, and tails and badges for the honourable members of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies) and the order in which the official procession proceeded from the Abdin Palace to the Parliament building. The occasion is illustrated with pictures of the Berline de Grand Gala leaving Abdin Palace pulled by eight horses and surrounded by runners in grand uniform, dignitaries arriving in parliament (Sir Miles and Lady Lampson, Russel Pasha, chief of police, Mohamed Bey Hamada, aide-de-camp of HM Queen Nazli, Mahmoud Pasha Sabit, the Japanese ambassador and Mohamed Yassin Bey). Other sections include the protocol to be followed for funerals, banquets, the king's prayers and religious ceremonies, the laying of foundation stones, the inauguration of institutions and exhibitions, the king's presence at a performance at the Royal Opera House, sporting events, the royal shoot and the king's transfer to Alexandria for the summer season. Flags, decorations and the national anthem are described in separate sections.

The last chapter expounds on the protocol of the king's visits abroad and includes an extract from the *Illustrated London News*, dated 11 July 1846, which describes the Reform Club Banquet attended by Ibrahim Pasha and the menu which was served on this occasion, as well as photographs of King Fouad, riding up the Mall with British monarch King George V, then riding in Rome with King Victor Emmanuel III during the Egyptian king's European tour in July 1927.

This volume is definitely a luxurious addition to the library of royalists and historians alike. But Farag's goal is not really to write history; rather, it is to popularise a very specific history, that of Mohamed Ali (1805-1848) and his descendants. Furthermore, since he has abstained from interpreting, analysing or contextualising events, this is a purely event-oriented version of the past.

While popularisation may seem an unlikely aim in view of the size and price of these works, Farag also intends to bring out more accessible paperback editions. As for *1952*, it is printed in an elaborate typeface on heavy, recycled paper and includes glossy reproductions of photographs and prints in the manner of a cherished family album. Its use for reference is limited, since Farag has compiled the official documents, translating when necessary, but has not indicated where they may be found. The photographs themselves, of course, are of great historical interest, however, and may be sufficient reason to covet the book.

Reviewed by ***Fayza Hassan***

Dreams of the sea

David Blanks examines the main themes to emerge from this month's third annual conference on cross-cultural encounters in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean compels us to dream. It lures us to foreign shores, where we arrive, anxious, only to be confronted with ourselves, which increases our anxiety still. So we sail into the past, searching for the insights that will calm our restless present. Returning with our cargo of solutions, we distribute gifts to friends and children, celebrate, sleep, dream again, and turn once more towards the sea, compelled evermore to search for treasures. In the words of the Greek poet Moschus (c. 150BC), "The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep / Tempt my unquiet mind."

Moschus was a man of diverse experience. A Greek born in Syracuse and living in Alexandria, he is a fitting symbol of the cross-cultural fertilisation that has made the Mediterranean the most dynamic region in the world. Although Mediterranean peoples remain fiercely loyal to language, religion, and ethnicity, distrustful of outside influences, protective of their customs and passionate about their pasts, whether or not they acknowledge it the traditions they fight for are themselves the products of heterogeneity and cultural diffusion. More than anything else, the 27 lectures delivered at this month's conference on "Education and the Dissemination of Knowledge" converged in the notion that the *only constant in the cultural history of the Mediterranean is boundless diversity*.

Where else in the world do tribal nomads live cheek by jowl with shipping magnates? Intellectuals of every political stripe with masses of illiterate peasants? Animists and atheists with monotheists and New Agers? Shameful poverty with shameless wealth? States centuries old with nations born in the sixties? Superpowers with developing countries? Oral culture with the Internet? Mountain-dwellers with inhabitants of marshes, deserts, valleys, and plains? And all with a common identity? Every one of these groups consider themselves Mediterranean peoples with a shared heritage.

Take Malta as an example. As the Maltese ambassador to Egypt, Ives De Barro, explained in his keynote address, the Maltese are extremely proud of their rich cultural mix. At various times the island has been controlled by Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, the Knights of St. John, the French, and the British; but the nation gained its independence in 1964 and throughout its trials and tribulations the Maltese have maintained their language, their Catholic religion, their sense of identity and their sense of humour. Many times during its history Malta has suffered invasion and celebrated liberation, and in the Mediterranean world this makes it typical: there is no country that has not experienced the ebb and flow of domination and independence.

The organisers of this year's conference, which was co-sponsored by the Department of English and Comparative Literature and the Department of Arabic Studies, asked participants to write about the ways in which ideas, technologies, economies, and belief systems developed and spread throughout North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East as a result of warfare or peaceful exchange. This approach yielded a wide-ranging series of interdisciplinary sessions that brought together foreign and Egyptian scholars to discuss themes as diverse as pharaonic medicine, Euclidean mathematics, global ethics, and post-structuralist theory. At times the lectures were a bit too disparate, but some common themes emerged.

One recurrent observation was that whereas civilisations have profited from the exchange of ideas, the cost of diversity can be the loss of cultural autonomy. Novelist Radwa Ashour, professor of literature at Ain Shams University, recounted the suffering of the Moriscos, Muslims forced to convert to Christianity in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries following what is commonly referred to as the "reconquest" of Spain. The harsh rule of the Spanish authorities *is well-documented*, but Ashour stressed cultural violence, for instance, the promulgation of laws that forbade eating lamb and wearing the veil. Language was also suppressed. Poets were forced to work in secret or else to express their ideas in a foreign idiom, writing Arabic words in a Latinate form. Eventually the Moriscos rose in rebellion (1568-1571), but in the early seventeenth century they were chased from the land that had been their home for more than 800 years.



The Three Philosophers, by Giorgione, with Ibn Rushd, centre

Even in times of peace the dissemination of knowledge can be a threat. Ambassador De Barro noted that English is displacing Maltese as the language of science, the arts, journalism, administration, and business. This has long been a concern in Mediterranean countries. Again and again the French have attempted to legislate against the creeping cultural malaise they call "Franglais". Across the sea, however, Algerians and Moroccans are more concerned about French as the language of cultural imperialism, and everywhere today Mediterranean families must come to terms with the "Age of Multiculturalism". Parents delight in the fact that their children can speak fluently in Arabic, English, and French, but educators and employers worry about the increasing number of ostensibly bilingual and trilingual college graduates who cannot write clearly in any language.

In part this is a function of the dissemination of other types of knowledge borne far above the waves by airplanes and satellites. It is often said that in the ancient world the Mediterranean was not so much a barrier between nations as it was a means of passage. Yet while shipping is still important to the economies of nations such as Greece and Egypt, the sea is no longer the purveyor of ideas and culture, and most Mediterranean ports are in decline, having surrendered their quays, promenades, and cafés to a particularly invidious form of neo-colonialism known as the package tour.

On the positive side, continuous diversity and exchange is responsible for the quality and renown of Mediterranean culture. When comparing the region's peoples, scholars and journalists tend to emphasise differences, especially on the level of political and economic affairs, but merchants and tourists know better — a Catalonian can find his paella in Istanbul just as easily as a German can make himself understood in Santorini or Sharm El-Sheikh. Thus from the perspective of Asians and Americans, the Mediterranean still seems like the centre of the world — economically, politically, religiously, culturally — even if many of us have lost confidence in the idea. Focusing on philosophy, science, literature, and education, several scholars emphasised the generative interplay of East and West, past and present, and the ways in which these cross-cultural encounters have created the dynamism that makes the Mediterranean an exporter of ideas, technologies, and belief systems.

Marilyn Garber, a historian from California State University, analysed the impact of the Isis myth in the work of the Toronto-based writer Margaret Atwood who "immerses herself in the icons and texts of Ancient Egypt where antique narratives exert a remarkable capacity to resituate themselves in new geographical and spatial circumstances." Similarly, Robert Switzer (AUC), spoke of the role of Egyptian mathematics in Greek philosophy. Greek educators taught freedom through self-control. Teachers were seen as guardians of the masses, musicians charged with "tuning the souls of the city." Sometimes, however, teaching is not enough. The problem of conveying knowledge was raised in a session on the diffusion of Sufism. And in their search for an Arabic theory of critical discourse, Daniel Vitkus (AUC) and Anthony Calderbank (AUC) pointed to the poststructuralist distrust of words. Using the twelfth-century Andalusian tract *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* as their example, they suggested that fears of linguistic imperialism are exaggerated if language itself is "the veil that lies before the truth."

The great irony in studying the Mediterranean is that in thinking about the sea one always ends up writing about the land. Standing on the shore we gaze outwards, but our thoughts are not at rest; they stretch across the water to the unknown shores on the other side. The Mediterranean tempts our minds because it is our passage to the unfamiliar — or else our thoughts are turned back on our own inland worlds. Perhaps this is why the Romans called it either "Mare Nostrum" (our sea) or "Mare Mediterraneum" (the sea enclosed by lands). At first they felt none of the temptation of the Greeks, preferring their farms to the unfamiliar; but eventually they too were compelled, and they made themselves masters, forging a Mediterranean empire where peace reigned from Hadrian's Wall to the Temple of Hatshepsut, where the same language was spoken in Gibraltar and Jerusalem, the same laws followed, and the rights of citizenship shared by all. And everywhere the peoples of the Mediterranean were allowed to keep their own customs, practice their own religion, and pursue their own versions of happiness. So we sail into the past, searching for the insights that will calm our restless present.

Plain Talk

I have noticed a growing popular interest in the plastic arts in Egypt and judging by the number of galleries and exhibitions currently being held there can be little doubt that the visual arts are flourishing.

Having said this, I hasten to add that while dozens of exhibitions are organised every week, very little is written about them. There is a dearth of serious art criticism in Egypt. *Al-Ahram Weekly* has, no doubt, filled some of the gap. It is also encouraging to find that *Al-Ahram* has now started a page for the plastic arts, edited by Makram Henein and Mohamed Seleima.

However, a new publication has just come out which aims at creating a permanent channel for art criticism. *Ain* is a beautifully produced magazine. Its 290 pages abound with interesting and valuable material, dealing with a number of issues relating to the plastic arts. The editor is Adel El-Siwi, himself one of our leading artists and the first issue is the result of cooperation among a number of artists. An important point to mention, according to the short preface by Adel El-Siwi, is that the production costs of the magazine, which must be quite high judging by the quality of the printing and the colour separation, were financed by the artists themselves. Over 33 artists contributed with the proceeds of works sold at a special exhibition.

The aim of the magazine is to act as a counterbalance to the amateurish way in which the majority of publications deal with art. No wonder one of the main topics in the magazine is based on two seminars about the Crisis of Art Criticism in Egypt. It starts with the assumption that "Egyptian creative art is a body with no head. It is a body of work accumulating without there being any real theoretical work to accompany it, to identify its strong and weak elements or to record its development and the questions it raises in any serious way".

Twelve artists and writers discuss this issue in two separate seminars and their discussions raise a number of interesting points. Dr Ahmed Nawwar spoke about criticism being a journalistic rather than analytical operation, while Ezzeddin Naguib lamented the lack of any appreciation of wider social contexts, the absence of which threatens the growth of any individual endeavour, allowing criticism to become just another kind of flattery which only emphasises the gulf between traditional criticism and modern experiments in art. Ibrahim Abdel-Malek underlined the critic-artist relation, while Maged Youssef advocated that there should be a historical context, showing that the division between the creation and the study of art which exists in Egypt is unknown in the West.

A strong attack against existing art criticism was voiced by Helmi El-Touni who said that there has been no decent art criticism in Egypt since the 1940s, adding that he believed the standard of modern Egyptian art to be going downhill. Dr Sabri Mansour claimed that critical writing had been reduced to the standards of contemporary journalism while Ahmed Fouad Selim raised an interesting point saying that there was no real historical example of an Egyptian plastic arts movement comparable to the literary movements.

One of the most important subjects dealt with in this issue is the representation of the human body; an issue which, according to an article by Adel El-Siwi, arouses endless controversy in contemporary Egypt. The question is whether to cover or uncover. The writer proves that by looking at our ancient heritage, we find discussions of the body taking place with a freedom unmatched in the West. Paintings and sculptures which display nudity are nowadays, however, forbidden and campaigned against, even by university professors specialised in art. After giving examples of the treatment of the body in the West and in Egypt, he explains that the Egyptian experience is based on a historical background, beginning with pharaonic representations of the body and includes, in his analysis, works by Mahmoud Mukhtar, Mahmoud Said, Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar and Kamal Khalifa. "The human body," he concludes, "will always be able to astonish and will remain ever a subject for contemplation."

The magazine includes sections on Arab artists, international art movements and an interesting article and interview with Munir Cana'an alongside résumés of a number of artists which constitute a much-called-for archive. There is no doubt that this *new magazine fills* a gap that has existed for a long time.

Mursi Saad El-Din

Hammam El-Doud

SITUATED toward the end of Mohamed Ali Street, where it intersects with Midan El-Helmiya, *Hammam* El-Doud is one of the lesser-known baths, writes Fayza Hassan. At present, it is almost completely concealed by the canvas sheeting covering the adjacent *kebab* restaurant, which is being renovated. Part of the *hammam*'s front door, painted in bright yellow and baby blue by recent tenants, is blocked by a padlocked metal door, captured by photographer Randa Shaath. The building, or what is left of it, is in a general state of disrepair. Most of the original fittings except for part of a fountain are gone, and several rooms are being used as a carpenter's depot. The skylight and the chimney are still standing, though they look rather fragile and in great need of urgent attention. Workers at the back of the hammam are engaged in some sort of activity. They claim to be rebuilding the external walls which have collapsed, but closer observation yielded no clues as to what is really going on. Some building or part thereof has collapsed in one of the side alleys, rendering access to the back of the bath slightly hazardous, but it is unclear if this is part of the original *hammam* and its auxiliary rooms. It seems that the restaurant might extend in this direction.

Hammam El-Doud was built in the 13th century by Seif El-Din *El-Doud El-Jashankiri*, one of Aybak El-Turjuman's emirs. When Aybak's son El-Mansour was defeated by *Seif El-Din Qutuz* in 657AH (1258AD), El-Doud was jailed and the *hammam* became a *waqf* with his daughters as beneficiaries. Ali Mubarak mentions in *Al-Khitat* that *Hammam* El-Doud was a popular bath, frequented by men and women. By the look of things, it is possible that it took a turn for the worse soon after the end of the last century.





The help of strangers

A hotline counselling service on HIV/AIDS has been an initial success. Dina Ezzat reports

On the walls of Cairo's main underground station is a large billboard that seems to attract the attention of young men and women waiting for the metro. It reads: "Ask about AIDS. Don't hesitate to call us on the hotline."

The advertisement for the hotline, now entering its sixth month, also appears in newspapers, magazines and on the bulletin boards of different universities. TV and radio programmes have also covered the new service, broadcasting information to those other means have not reached.

"We launched a fairly extensive propaganda campaign before we started actual operations because we had to make sure that our message got through to people across the nation," says Dr Nasr El-Sayed, co-director of the HIV/AIDS hotline-counseling service and director of the Ministry of Health-affiliated National Programme for Combating HIV/AIDS.

Since the beginning of September, when the counsellors at the Imbaba-based centre received their first telephone call, the centre has been doing well, according to staff.

"We are getting many more calls than expected. We feel we are playing an important role in answering the questions of concerned individuals and in spreading a better sense of awareness among so many people," states Mervat Guindi, co-director of the centre.

Founded by the Ministry of Health and the Ford Foundation in Cairo, the centre has three booths for counsellors to receive calls and answer queries, and two rooms for the one-on-one counseling for those who chose to go to the centre. "The main purpose of this centre is to provide more information that is accurate and scientific about HIV/AIDS," explains El-Sayed. The long-term goal is to encourage people who suspect that they are infected to have the necessary tests, thus dispelling the fears of those who are unduly worried, and above all to instruct high-risk groups on ways of protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS.

El-Sayed, Guindi and their medical and social co-workers have been working hard to accomplish these dual aims. During the first three months of operation, counsellors at the centre received close to 3,700 calls. This was considered a very good start. The centre had expected no more than 70 per cent of these calls for its initial phase of operation because relatively widespread illiteracy and poverty minimise people's access to information.

The calls poured in, however, from all over Egypt. "We received calls from every governorate in Lower and Upper Egypt with the exception of the New Valley, where access to telephone lines is minimal outside the capital of the governorate," Guindi notes.

The largest number of calls came from the Greater Cairo region, where literacy and better living standards are more common. Most of the callers — about 83 per cent — were single males aged between 18 and 34. Many are university students. This said, there was also a good number of children and women callers. "We received calls from kids under 13 and women of different economic and age brackets," Guindi explains.

The types of questions also varied. About 60 per cent of the questions focused on non-sexual issues, with callers asking for detailed information about infection and methods of prevention as well as other basic health information related to HIV/AIDS. The queries of the other 40 per cent of the callers had to do with transmission through sexual intercourse. "They were mostly questions from people who did or wanted to do something and wanted to make sure that they were not in danger of catching the disease. In other words, they were questions about personal sexual patterns and orientations", says Guindi.

In general, according to staff at the centre, young unmarried men ask questions about ways to protect themselves during casual sex, while women ask about more specific issues.

As the administrators affirm, answering questions "does not at all mean that the centre takes any moral stand with regard to any given practice. Providing information is not tantamount to condoning or condemning."

To make sure that the service will be in tune with Egyptian cultural conditions, a number of ground rules were set from the beginning for counsellors to follow. The basic line is to stick to technical terms and avoid talking about personal views on sexual behaviour or preferences. While a counsellor may have to advise a homosexual male to use a condom, he or she is not allowed to engage in a conversation on the ethical rights and wrongs of homosexuality. And while many counsellors may encourage women callers to use a condom during sex with their husbands if the latter take drugs, they cannot suggest that these women practice abstinence.

"All counsellors received adequate and sufficient training. They know how to provide the service without making religious or social *faux pas*, because that could endanger the entire operation," El-Sayed explains.

The centre also makes a point of turning down any calls from individuals who call to report on a relative or a friend. "We just don't accept this kind of call," asserts Guindi, adding: "It happened many times that a man calls to say that he is reporting on a suspected AIDS patient, but since our mission is to spread awareness and not to police people's behaviour, we always ask the caller to encourage the person in question to give us a call."

Since this is the first hotline service in Egypt, some callers were hesitant to immediately address the point. "In the beginning, there was quite a lot of beating around the bush, but after two or three telephone conversations, the caller would come out with it and ask his or her question," said El-Guindi.

As trust was built, some callers went directly to the centre to make use of the testing services available there. In most cases, people were reassured. "Almost 99 per cent of those who came for blood tests proved negative. And many of the callers are practicing safe sex," one staff member says.

Many attribute the success of the centre to the privacy it allows callers. In a country where sexual matters are still shrouded in taboo, and where social barriers prohibit people from seeking direct information on sex-related problems, the idea of being "the stranger on the other end of the line" breaks the ice and encourages people to come forward with their questions. Many women callers also prefer to have women counsellors, an option the hotline affords them. Some men also prefer to speak with men counsellors.

The HIV/AIDS counselling/hotline centre in Cairo is fashioned after a similar centre in Florida. The Ministry of Health sent staff on a training course at the Florida centre, in order to ensure that they would acquire the communication skills necessary for the job. "The counsellors need to know how to be patient with anxious callers... how to dispel fears and explain medical issues in a simple and comprehensible language," says El-Sayed.

Egyptian NGOs working in the field of HIV/AIDS awareness and women's reproductive health advocates say that the centre is a big step in the right direction, and is encouraging people to talk about and deal with their sexual and reproductive health problems.



Curried kangaroo

Under the heading "Exotic flavours" in the Style section of a leading British newspaper, readers are informed this week that "[t]here was a time when exotic meant an avocado. Now no dinner party is complete without a dish of steamed baby bok choi, a tamarillo compote or papaya salsa... Certainly, the more we use exotic ingredients, the more exciting our cooking can be," explains the writer, a teensy bit patronisingly.

And what, in this particular case, qualifies as exciting? Preceeded by a light salad of Japanese white radish (exotically known as *daikon*), and followed by a soufflé of Turkish Delight (exotically known as *loukoum*), a little kangaroo curry is what the doctor prescribes.

Now those gourmets readers who might be living on the wrong side of London and cannot find kangaroo meat handy at their local supermarket should not despair. It is readily available by mail order — directly from the hunters, presumably. Mind you, preparing such a delicacy is no mean task, and it takes no less than sixteen ingredients to mask its real taste, but it is really a small price to pay if one is to achieve authentic exoticism.

The readers are also reminded that "kangaroo is one of a host of alternatives now available from supermarkets and specialist suppliers." What other chic items could their refrigerators be keeping in store, one wonders... Whole parrots, peacock steaks, pickled porcupines, crocodile fillets, armadillo snouts?

For more delicacies directly from the jungle, I found that children's books are actually a good source of inspiration. Some are more graphic about the possibilities than others. A favourite in my childhood featured little Sambo trapped up a coconut tree by two ferocious tigers. He managed to trick them into fighting so hard that they eventually melted. Gemima, Sambo's mother, then made absolutely scrumptious pancakes with their fat, to feed her unharmed and ravenous little boy. A recipe of pancakes cooked in tiger fat followed. Personally, I found the idea revolting.

Not all fables are as gastronomically explicit — fortunately — but many can provide decent inspiration to enrich gourmet cooks' menus, nevertheless. Take Winnie the Pooh, for instance. Forget Piglet, who really makes too common a dish, being so practical and down-to-earth; forget Eeyore, whose sad flesh is already being sampled on a regular basis, we are told; Kanga and Baby Roo have already taken their rightful gastronomic place, as seen in this week's recipe; but how about Pooh himself? He is quite a plump little bear and would certainly be appreciated by the most finicky of your guests if served roasted whole on a spit, with lots of honey mustard. Also courtesy of Pooh, for an original appetiser you can try serving his grilled paws, marinated first in apple vinegar with fresh coriander and a handful of caraway seeds.

Alice's white rabbit might prove a little muscular for a refined *souper à deux*, I admit, what with all the running around he does, but there is no shortage of culinary hints in Wonderland. A truly unique dish could be produced by presenting a Gryfon in his feathers with a dollop of ground caterpillar purée, or a mixed grill of Duck, Dodo, and Eaglet's wings, previously marinated in the pool of tears. Even the Jabberwocky could be put to good use, with bits of parsley elegantly protruding from its nostrils. The possibilities are clearly endless.

To attend such delicate little suppers, guests should be dressed for the occasion, understandably, and the same Style supplement has several suggestions as to what to wear, the simplest being a goatskin skirt teamed with a bull-skin jacket, the latter trimmed with coyote fur. And, while we are at it, why not a few porcupine needles, artistically planted in a carelessly knotted chignon and a rhinoceros horn, mounted in gold or silver and worn around the neck, to add a touch of realism to the desired natural rugged effect?

Naively, I decided to (verbally) regale one of my friends with some of the "exotic" menus I had been collecting over the weeks. I also included descriptions of this season's fashion, directly "borrowed" from the jungle. "So?" she asked after listening to some select passages. "I attended a wedding here, not long ago, where a whole roasted reconstituted kangaroo was presented to the distinguished guests; breasts of peacock were served as an entrée." She had several stories of her own, involving the kinds of meat, feathers and furs used to grace her friends' tables and/or backs.

The other day, I went shopping at a fancy supermarket. There was little I could not have found for less, elsewhere. Looking around, I remembered that we were in dire need of a feather duster, an implement my mother had often advised me never to own, on the grounds that it promotes laziness among cleaning personnel. "Why not?" I thought. The laziness threshold in our home had been transcended long ago. Feather dusters of different colours and sizes were artistically displayed. I inquired about the price of a particular item which looked sturdier than the rest. "Twelve pounds," the salesgirl announced, after checking. "That's a lot," I told her. "Not for pure ostrich feathers, it's not," she protested. I dropped the duster at once, with images of the silly bird before my eyes. Did they kill it to pluck its feathers? And if so, what did they do with the rest? I did not think the salesgirl knew the answers.

There were cheaper dusters, anyway. These were made of chicken feathers. I wanted something synthetic, "plastic", I told the helpful but somewhat bewildered saleswoman. She tried to explain the advantages of real feathers. A faint odour of the coop tickled my nose. "Give me those," I said quickly, grabbing some yellow rags. I needed a broom too. The one I selected was fifty-two pounds, according to the salesgirl. "Why?" I asked; "is it made of silk?" It was imported, she informed me, and made of pure horse hair. Now why we would want to import brooms is a question I have no answer for. Neither did the salesgirl, for that matter. I couldn't remember ever using a broom when I lived abroad. Were they specially manufactured for export to Egypt, then? And if so, were they killing the horses to produce them, or just pulling strands of hair off their manes and tails? Though I knew where to buy a cheap broom, I decided against it. I had never realised how many animals were being sacrificed daily at the altar of the household gods. The cost of an ordinary broom is around six pounds. What animal, I wondered, could be used for that price? Field mice? I had never hungered for exotic meats, but I could no longer fool myself. By buying a broom, I, too, killed Kanga and Baby Roo. I told my baffled maid that, from now on; she would only use the vacuum cleaner.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Croquettes with minced meat

Ingredients:
1 kg potatoes
1/4 kg minced meat (cooked)
2 egg yolks
1 tbsp butter ghee
For coating: 2 eggs (whole and beaten)
A dash of milk
Breadcrumbs
Oil for deep frying
Salt + pepper + allspice

Method:
Scrub the potatoes clean, then boil them. Peel and mash them well. In a cooking pan, melt the butter ghee then add the mashed potatoes and stir until there is no trace of grease. Remove from heat and stir the egg yolks in vigorously until all ingredients blend well together. Season and stir again. Leave to cool then form into balls the size of a large egg. Dip your thumb inside the ball to make a dent without reaching the other end. Stuff with minced meat and fold back to close the hole. Immerse in the beaten eggs and milk then roll in breadcrumbs. Heat the oil until very hot and deep fry the croquettes until golden. Serve warm as a snack or a side dish.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

Lunch on a launch

Andrew Steele rediscovers America

The franchise for TGI Friday's is owned by Americana. This is rather appropriate as the name entirely sums up the hodgepodge of retro kitsch that adorns the walls. Assorted French horns and pieces of sports equipment mingle with '20s advertising posters and camp stills from '60s American television. Our table was presided over by a very un-'90s revamped Batman & Robin; huge and overstated, codpieces intact. Enigmatically, a chalkboard promising information on daily food and drink specials was adorned with the legend "Sod Fod Dod".

The crowd was largely of the mobile-telephone-bearing variety; and, were they not, they were almost certainly children of mobile telephone bearers. A birthday occurred midway through lunch and thus the waiting staff broke into the rather contrived Friday's birthday rap. Much noise was made by all. Having said this, service was, throughout, impeccable, if at times a little over-zealous.

Friday's prides itself on its exotic cocktails, so the drinks menu was first port of call. A Long Island Iced Tea and a Cape Codder ensued, the former looking not unlike a dodgy Stella, belying its vodka, gin, dark rum and coke composition. Refreshing was my companion's verdict, which, I must add was an equally good description of the other beverage: chilled vodka, cranberry juice and soda. I'm not known for my love of the 'fun-pub' cocktail, but with what turned out to be quite a heavy lunch this was a surprisingly good liquid accompaniment.

The menu is extensive, with traditional American fare alongside Cajun and Tex-Mex staples. We plumped for sharing a starter and two selections from the lunch menu. The starter might almost have been enough. A Friday's Three For One entails a mixture of what they claim are their most popular appetisers: breaded, fried mozzarella, loaded potato skins and buffalo wings (spicy chicken wings to the uninitiated). Four of each of the former, several of the latter, served with a selection of perfectly reasonable American-style dips. For the main course, I chose a Club Croissant while she had a Lunch Cajun Salad. And here came the major blooper of our visit — the main course arrived less than half way through the starter. But efficiency, along with everything else at Friday's, is often taken to extremes. The salad was proclaimed tasty (as regards the chicken) but limp (as regards the rest). It came in a state of undress, but mayonnaise was available on demand. My Club Croissant was a pleasing take on the ubiquitous club sandwich. Eschewing the usual faintly stale white loaf, the chef opted instead for a soft, fresh, flaky and indubitably French breakfast baking, stuffed with a plethora of those club sandwich ingredients — mercifully lacking on the egg front (I'm not really a lover of the hard boiled) and rather heavy on the turkey breast, but then mounds of moist turkey breast are not necessarily a bad thing. A goodly amount of unusually but pleasingly seasoned French fries chaperoned.

A jolly good stuffing then, but no room left, unfortunately, for one of Friday's famously over-the-top desserts. To conclude, a pleasant, albeit predictable lunch. We left, safe in the knowledge that the American Dream does exist: it's floating on the Nile, just opposite the UAE Embassy in Giza, where lunch for two, without service charge, came to LE 116.

TGI Friday's, 26 Sharia El-Nil, Giza, Tel: 5709690

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

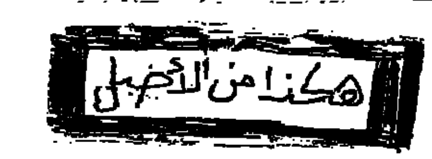
1		2	3	4	5	6	■	7	8	9	10	11		12
	■	13					■	14					■	
15	16	■	17				■	18				■	19	
20		21	■	22			23				■	24		
25			26		■	27			■	28	29			
30				■	■	31			■	■	32			
33				34	35	■		■	36	37				
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39	40	41				■		■	42			43	44	45
46				■	■	47		48	■	■	49			
50				51	■	52			■	53				
54			■	55	56				57		■	58		
59		■	60				■	61			62	■	63	
	■	64					■	65				66	■	
67							■	68						

Across
1. Convex bone in leg joint (7)
7. Repairs; coal in lumps (7)
13. Consolidate; unify (5)
14. Mountain nymph (5)
15. Symbol for "osmium" (2)
17. Wild-animal's lying-place (4)
18. Matched set (4)
19. Auxiliary verb (2)
20. Hint (3)
22. Evacuating (7)
24. ...mode, 2 wds (3)
25. Peasant; light-armed Irish foot-soldier (5)
27. Hardy cereal (3)
28. Celebrity; round of applause (5)
30. Miss Faber (4)
31. Genetic code (3)
32. Assistant (4)
33. Resounded again (6)
36. Assailed repeatedly (6)
38. Passionately (9)
39. Sylphlike (6)
42. Llama with long woolly hair (6)
46. Mount (4)
47. Dring by thimblefuls (3)
49. Stretch across (4)
50. Does nothing (5)
51. Agony of spirit (3)
53. Red fluorescent dye used as stain in microscopy (5)
54. Born (3)
55. Adjuster (7)
58. Archaic for "formerly" (3)
59. Proceed (2)
60. On the sheltered side (4)
61. Rara... (4)
63. Mr Pacino (2)
64. Up and about (5)
65. Cervices (5)
67. Passes away (7)
68. Disciplined (7)

Down
1. Door appendage used to call attention (7)
2. Unit of printing measure (2)
3. Elongated fish (3)
4. Want with all one's heart (5)
5. Money-exchange business (4)
6. Dot; duration (6)
7. Tulip-shaped sherry-glass (6)
8. North African port (4)
9. Yellowish-grey colour (5)
10. Except; ballet necessity (3)
11. Lord, abb. (2)
12. Worked like a slave (7)
16. Kid skin rubbed to a nap (5)
19. Grass flat spear-shaped leaf (5)
21. Sea eagle (4)
23. Type of yellow-flowered composite plant, its dried roots used to make coffee (9)
24. Landed (4)
26. Outer casing of plane's engine (7)
29. West Indian song in African rhythm (7)
34. Headdress (3)
35. Scandinavian monetary unit (3)
36. A school activity, abb. (3)
37. House addition (3)
39. Small sign-board; small rounded pebbles lying on seashore (7)
40. Recorded television film (5)
41. French pronoun (4)
43. Polygonal recess (4)
44. Refrain of popular song of French Revolution, 2 wds (5)
45. Earthworm (7)
47. Tart, pudding and jelly (6)
48. Doctrinaire; walking encyclopaedia (6)
51. Auctions (5)
53. Heath related to azalea and rhododendron (5)
56. Solely; pond (4)
57. At any time (4)
60. Mountain-peak (3)
62. Snow travelling vehicle (3)
64. Of films: to be seen only by persons over 14 (2)
66. Weather directions (2)

B	A	R	K	■	U	R	S	A	■	B	A	L	A	S
A	L	O	E	■	T	I	E	R	■	O	X	I	D	E
L	I	M	Y	■	M	A	T	T	■	L	E	V	E	E
E	V	A	■	D	O	N	■	S	E	E	■	E	N	D
D	E	N	T	I	S	T	■	■	A	R	K	■	■	■
■	■	■	O	R	T	■	H	E	R	O	I	C	A	L
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Last week's solution



Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

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In 1883, one year after British troops occupied Egypt, Britain appointed one of its top representatives in Cairo, Sir Evelyn Baring, who later became Lord Cromer — a famous name that has come to symbolise hard-fisted colonial rule. Egyptian newspapers called him 'dean of the British occupation.' He resigned in 1907, citing poor health. But the real reasons were reported to be his extreme severity in dealing with Egyptians and his overbearing attitude in dealing with the British Foreign Office. Cromer's resignation, generally greeted by Egyptians with pretended sorrow but genuine relief, and his departure from Egypt, are described here by **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** on the basis of reports published by *Al-Ahram*


Illustration: Makram Henein

At 6pm on Sunday 4 May 1907 in the Royal Opera House, farewell ceremonies for the High Commissioner of Egypt, Lord Cromer, began. "Mounted and infantry police were stationed in front of the Opera House in order to maintain order as people converged on those grounds which had been especially prepared to accommodate 1,200 guests," *Al-Ahram* wrote.

Several days after these ceremonies, described in minute first-hand detail by *Al-Ahram*'s correspondent, Lord Cromer departed from the country over which he had been the de facto ruler for nearly a quarter of a century (1883-1907). Regardless of how the Egyptian and British attitudes may differ toward this man, the impact he had on the course of Egyptian life was enormous. To Egyptians, he was the linchpin for consolidating British rule over Egypt. Some British commentators went as far as to call him "the second founder of modern Egypt" (Mohamed Ali being the first). What is certain is that Cromer went down in history as one of the primary architects of the "empire upon which the sun never set" and which reached its apogee during the Victorian era. Indeed, Cromer himself had become a symbol of British imperial domination in Egypt, so much so that later representatives of the British government who exercised an iron fist were known as Cromerists. Subsequent high commissioners who attempted to fill Cromer's shoes were Lord Kitchener (1911-1914), General Allenby (1919-1925), Lord Lloyd (1925-1929) and Lord Killearn (1933-1946). Killearn had something else in common with Cromer. Both acquired their peerages while serving as occupants of Dubara Palace (the High Commission offices in Cairo). Killearn, when he came to Egypt, was Sir Miles Lampson; Cromer was Sir Evelyn Baring.

It is odd that although Cromer's official position — political agent and consul general for Her Majesty's government — was actually relatively low in the diplomatic hierarchy, he served as the model for those who followed him, whether they were called "high commissioner", as was the case following World War I and the declaration of the British protectorate over Egypt, or "ambassador", the title bestowed on British representatives to Egypt in the wake of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. In reality, Cromer's official title did little to diminish his status or the importance of his position. Rather, it was a reflection of British imperial policy in Egypt. The British government had no desire to alter Egypt's legal status as a province subject to the nominal suzerainty of the Ottoman state. Great Britain could not have two high-level representatives, even in form, in both Cairo and Istanbul. Perhaps it was this discrepancy between Cromer's official status and his de facto power that inspired the Egyptian press to dub him the "dean of the British occupation" and even occasionally in *Al-Ahram*, the "chief of the occupation."

Returning to Lord Cromer's last year in power in Cairo and the events that led up to his resignation we find in our reading of *Al-Ahram* that 1906 was replete with major events. Dominating the news during the first half of that year was the Taba incident and a consequent rise in the call for pan-Arabism. The second half was dominated by the repercussions from the tragic Dinshway incident, which fuelled Egyptian nationalist aspirations. No one could have imagined, however, that these incidents would ultimately bring about the departure of the long-time incumbent of Dubara Palace.

What must have stirred the interest of observers above all that year was Cromer's introduction to his annual "Report on the finances, administration and general state of Egypt and Sudan." The introduction was generally devoted to a summary of political developments over the previous year. In his previous report, this summary did not exceed 7 lines. The report for 1906 by contrast was an unprecedented 15 pages long. In addition to the Taba border crisis, this introduction also dealt with developments concerning the Egyptian nationalist movement and the question of the Egyptian press. The report, published in 1907, needless to say, generated much debate in the press. *Al-Ahram* contributed numerous pages over several editions to commentaries on this section of Cromer's report, often responding to views expressed in the French and English press whose representatives operated out of Cairo. Nowhere in this report had Cromer intimated that he planned to resign from his post.

Al-Ahram did note, however, that the Cairo correspondent for the French newspaper *Le Temps* had written a lengthy commentary, not on the annual report, but on its author. Appearing in translation in *Al-Ahram* of 9 April 1907, the article said, "Lord Cromer is the son of a member of the British parliament. Hardly had he come of age than he joined the military service of his country as a soldier at the age of 18. He rose quickly through the ranks, becoming first a captain and then a major. In 1861 he served as an aide-de-camp with Sir Henry Stork in the Greek islands after which he travelled to Jamaica as a member of the inquiry commission of 1865. Then he served as special adviser to the Lord of Northbrook, governor-general of India, where he resided from 1872 to 1876. Lord Cromer, then Evelyn Baring, travelled to Cairo in 1877 at the command of his government in order to represent his government in the Caisse de la Dette Publique. Two years later, during which interval the Khedive Ismail was deposed, Cromer was appointed superintendent of the Caisse. Shortly afterwards came the Orabi rebellion, the massacre of Alexandria, the evacuation of Egyptian troops from Sudan and the British occupation of Egypt. All these problems and upheavals caused the government of Britain to consider whom they might appoint to head the occupation. The choice fell upon Lord Cromer and ensuing events and developments only confirmed them in the belief that they had chosen well, for the man never lost the confidence and esteem of all the successive British governments, regardless of their different political orientations."

The day after this article appeared, *Al-Ahram* was to learn the secret behind the French newspaper's special attention to Cromer's biography. It was then that Reuters reported that the British prime minister had announced to the House of Commons that Cromer had decided to tender his resignation and read out Cromer's letter to that effect: "I have reached the conclusion that I must ask you to accept my resignation. I have come to this resolve after lengthy deliberation and consultation with my physician, Sir Stephan McKenzie. It is extremely important to me that it is understood that the reasons for this decision are entirely health-related and that there are absolutely no political reasons that have the slightest bearing on my resolve."

As might be expected from such an unanticipated announcement, pandemonium erupted. No one was prepared to take Cromer's letter of resignation at face value. There had to be some secret and *Al-Ahram* was among the many eager to discover it.

At first, undoubtedly due to the shock caused by the announcement, everyone — Cromer's friends and adversaries alike — expressed a certain degree of dismay. Even *Al-Ahram*, known for its aversion to what he stood for, said: "What one can offer is merely a sketch of this man's political life, for it is too extensive." The khedive himself even paid a personal visit to Cromer in order to express his regrets. But one can be fairly certain that if Khedive Abbas II went so far as to shed tears, they would have been crocodile tears.

In search for a clue leading to the secret behind Cromer's resignation, *Al-Ahram* scanned the columns of the foreign press, particularly the French newspapers. One newspaper, it reported, suggested that the reason for Cromer's resignation was that the British prime minister, Sir Campbell-Bannerman was angered at the way Cromer handled the Dinshway incident, compounding the resentment he felt at Cromer's tendency to attempt to sway the Foreign Office's decisions with regard to Egypt. According to the article, the prime minister presented the foreign minister with two alternatives: either he should insist that Cromer change his policy or he could ask him to resign. The secretary opted for the latter solution, simultaneously notifying the cabinet that Sir Eldon Gorst would replace Cromer. *Al-Ahram* was careful to add that it only reprinted this story for the sake of its news interest and that it could not either confirm or refute it.

In spite of this reservation, *Al-Ahram* could not afford to lag behind the other newspapers in the race to discover the secret behind Cromer's resignation. The following day, therefore, it printed another story taken from a foreign newspaper, prefacing it with the comment that this story appeared to sustain the belief in its veracity: "While failing health may have a hand in Lord Cromer's decision, as well as Lady Cromer's desire to return to England, the first and foremost reason for tendering his resignation is that Cromer wanted to implement a severe policy in Egypt and that he had designed a plan dealing one of the violent blows for which he is notorious. After considerable debate and deliberation his government refused to approve this policy. Consequently, he resigned on the pretext of ill-health, which in all events is true as well."

In addition to seeking to satisfy their curiosity as to the causes for Cromer's resignation, *Al-Ahram* readers must have also avidly followed the news of his preparations to take his final leave of Egypt, which was to take place within a month. A committee was formed to undertake the planning. The committee decided firstly to open subscriptions for donations to the orphanage that had been sponsored by Cromer's first wife in Cairo. Secondly, they decided that appropriate farewell celebrations should be held in the Opera House during which three speeches would be given, the first by Fahmi on behalf of the Egyptian people, the second by the foreign community, and the third by Cromer himself.

"The nation appears reluctant to honour Lord Cromer," was how *Al-Ahram* described the lack of enthusiasm with which the Egyptian public greeted the committee's mission. Some occupation authorities attributed the public's reaction to intimations emanating from Abdin Palace. Others accused the nationalist press of influencing the public's sympathies.

Al-Ahram's response to these assertions came in an article entitled, "If the truth be told: Lord Cromer and the Egyptian Nation." Appearing on 22 April, it said, "The Egyptian people do not hate Lord Cromer as a venerable old politician who has spent many long years among them. Rather, what they hate is his policy of excluding the Egyptians from participating in the government of their country to the extent that they have come to feel like hired hands, alien in their own land. The occupation came in order to teach the Egyptians how to rule themselves; yet Lord Cromer's policy was to tell them that they do not deserve to learn how to rule themselves, that they are not worthy of being a separate entity and that their hopes and aspirations for progress and advancement do not merit respect. If the people appear reluctant to honour Lord Cromer, it is not because they bear him a personal grudge, but rather it is an expression of protest against the policy which did not groom the Egyptians to become free rulers, autonomous politicians and economists capable of managing their own affairs."

All awaited Cromer's speech during the farewell ceremonies scheduled for 4 May 1907. What must have come as a surprise to some was that Cromer in fact gave two speeches rather than one. The first, delivered in French, was a flattering expression of gratitude. In his second speech — in English, lengthier and much more serious in tone — Cromer outlined what he considered to be his achievements during his term as consul-general. Some of the contents of this speech would provoke an uproar among Egyptians.

"Many have told me," Cromer said, "that Egyptians in general do not recognise the favours and benefits which have undoubtedly been bestowed upon them. My response to that is: I do not know how Egyptians feel but I have no doubt that the people of Egypt have suffered much hardship in the past. Yet, whatever the Egyptian feelings and sensitivities and regardless of the arguments and evidence that might be proffered, it would be difficult to dissuade me from the noble illusion which I entertain, if indeed it is an illusion. By this I mean that I cannot believe that Egyptians can deny that the hand of Western civilisation which has been extended to them by Britain over the past 25 years is responsible for delivering them from the cesspit of despair into which fate has thrown them. While I am convinced that the present generation does not recognise this obvious truth, I nevertheless cherish the hope that their offspring will come to realise it. After all, it is said that the children of the blind are generally born clear-sighted."

His next step was to direct his comments against the khedive. The khedive, he said, was capable of elevating his people from the moral standpoint. "He can put an end to the scandals in the Ministry of *Awqaf* [religious endowments] and cleanse it of the filth that corrupts the morals and ethics of this country. *He is capable of demonstrating to his co*-religionists that he can reform the religious courts without violating he fundamental principles of Islam." It was impossible to turn a blind eye to Cromer's remarks. The anger of the newspaper *Al-Liwa'* was predictable, particularly in view of vehement criticism voiced in this mouthpiece of the National Party against Cromer's handling of the Dinshway incident. The same applies to *Al-Mu'ayyid* in light of its loyalty to the khedive. Yet, even the mouthpiece for the Umma Party, known for its opposition to the khedive and support for the reforms instituted by Cromer, was driven to take a 180 degree turn against Cromer.

As for *Al-Ahram*, its response appeared on the front page of its 8 May edition. Cromer's speech, it wrote, was not merely to vent his anger in response to the criticism levelled against him for his handling of the Dinshway incident. "Lord Cromer did not miss his mark nor did the Egyptians mistake their ears. He described the demands of Egyptians as childish and launched a bitter attack against their khedive. One can virtually see that he has sworn by God and all that is holy that he will continue to fight Egyptian's hopes and aspirations in London. He has also affirmed that his successor will not deviate from his policy. This was not said out of anger or resentment, but rather in his capacity as a politician who knows that politicians are governed by circumstances and must accommodate themselves to every shifting wind."

After all the ceremonies for Cromer's retirement had ended, Cromer collected his papers and prepared for his sunset days. This period — not longer than a decade for Cromer died in 1917 — was not unproductive. He was active in the House of Lords, where he was particularly concerned with Egyptian affairs. During this interval he wrote two books based on his memoirs of Egypt: *Modern Egypt* published in 1908 and *Abbas II* published in 1915.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



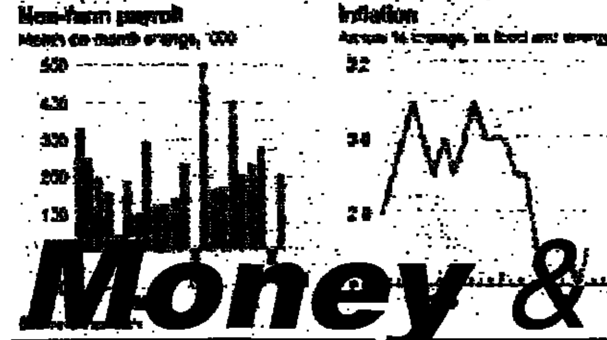
Portugal to host Al-Ahram products exhibition

LISBON will host the first Al-Ahram Exhibition for Egyptian products from 5-13 July 1997. Mongi Ali Badr, Egyptian ambassador to Portugal, said that Portugal is considered a promising market for Egyptian exports.

The Egyptian Embassy in Portugal will sponsor the event.

Egyptian products on display will include foodstuffs, textiles, chemical products, leather products, aluminium, carpets, furniture, ceramics and Khan Al-Khalili handicrafts. Deadline for reservations and visa requests is 1 June 1997.

It is worth noting that direct sales to the public will be permitted at the exhibition.



Money & Business

Egyptian-Ukrainian bank discussed

A UKRAINIAN delegation which includes prominent bankers and is currently visiting Egypt discussed the establishment of a joint venture bank between the two countries.

Eissa El-Ayouti, chairman of the Nile Bank, was nominated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate between the two countries. He stated that the Ukrainian delegation showed interest in importing Egyptian products such as leather, textiles and ready-made clothing.

El-Ayouti added that Egypt should look towards the Commonwealth states, considered a traditional market for Egyptian exports, to meet its export goals.

NBE finances projects and extends novel services

IN LIGHT of its pioneering role in enhancing the Egyptian economy and developing banking activities, the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) adopted a comprehensive strategy tilted towards expanding the scope of project finance and extending new financial service, which cope with international innovations and meet the demands of the domestic market. Accordingly, NBE has embarked upon breaking through the following fields:

— Syndicated loans among a group of Egyptian banks, in pursuance of maximising returns and distributing risks. This is in addition to enhancing the competitive edge of the Egyptian institutions and companies and giving them access to new fields of activities and capital-intensive investments.

— Secularisation of the debts of insolvent companies, so as to strike a balance in their financing structures, and provide for an optimal utilisation of the available resources. It is noteworthy that the bank established a new department to effect these operations.

— Selling debts according to a new system that bails debtor projects, and reduces the debt burden, in addition to tailoring alternative plans and scenarios for the revival of such projects.

— Embarking upon BOT and BOOT processes to enhance the capacity of new industrial areas and shed light on the undeveloped areas that lack sound infrastructure such as ports, airports, roads, telecommunications, water, electric power, etc. In that vein, NBE established the Egyptian Urban Investment and Construction Co to operate according to the BOT system and the Egyptian Universal Co for Urban Development to operate according to the BOOT system. In addition, the necessary procedures are currently underway for the establishment of the International Co for Infrastructure and Construction, which will function in the same field.

— Financial restructuring of ailing companies, whether through settlement of indebtedness or treatment of bad debts with a view to putting such companies on the right track and help them achieve a surplus for replacement and renewal plans or the introduction of developed production lines.

In fact, NBE's penetration of these new fields and financial services assures its unfailing efforts to sustain its position on top of the Egyptian banking system, and enhance Egypt's economic development.

Mapping for oil and gas exploration

GEOMAP Consultants has recently expanded its activities to cover the area of producing image maps and other geo-information, using SPOT data, for the oil and gas exploration companies.

SPOT satellite images are most suitable and widely used worldwide for this purpose. Image maps produced using SPOT panchromatic and multi-spectral data provide the users in the petroleum sector with a valuable tool to use in their exploration activities.

The high resolution SPOT data and its digital nature and lack of distortion provides unique advantages for interpretation.

As a leading company in the field of mapping and remote sensing, GeoMap is already producing such geo-products for a number of oil and gas exploration companies including GNR and IEOC.

The range of products includes image maps of scales 1:25 000, 1:50 000 and 1:100 000, produced according to user-defined specification such as map projection, level of enhancement, colour enhancement, etc.

The value-added products also include classification maps, land use maps, vector enhanced feature maps and Digital Elevation Models.

GeoMap Consultants is not only providing the produced maps in digital and hard copy formats, but also the original satellite images and the image processing software used to display and process the digital data.

Egypt reaps success at Abu Dhabi fair

THE EGYPTIAN pavilion at the Abu Dhabi International Fair achieved a great success, with a number of contracts concluded with trade organisations operating in the field of chemical industries.

Dr Ahmed Guweili, minister of trade and home trade explained to the International Marketing and Exhibitions Authority that Egypt needs to take part in major exhibitions held throughout the Arab world, Africa and Asia. The importance of these exhibitions, he stated, lies in promoting Egyptian goods, and in their potential for opening new markets for Egyptian exports in different countries of the world.

Rushdi Saqr, head of the International Marketing and Exhibitions Authority, stated that it was within this framework that the authority participated in the 4th Abu Dhabi International Fair, held at the Abu Dhabi Exhibition Centre from 28 April - 4 May. Fifty-six companies, excluding real estate companies, displayed their wares in the Egyptian pavilion, which covered an area of 1,928 square metres.

New light on pyramid-builders

How healthy were the workers and artisans who built the Giza Pyramids? **Nevine El-Aref** investigates

Following the discovery of a workers' and artisans' cemetery on the Giza Plateau two years ago, such questions as their health, remuneration and incidence of accidents are now being investigated and the results are expected to cast considerable light on their lives. Learning more about the pyramid-builders from their tombs and remains should put to rest, once and for all, wild theories that the monuments were built by space travellers or the people of the legendary Atlantis.

In an attempt to learn more about the domestic and religious life of the pyramid-builders, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), in collaboration with the American National Institute of Health (NIH) and Mu'mena Kamel, professor of virology at the Faculty of Medicine of Cairo University, have started a scientific study on the workers' bones and other remains. Their work is expected to reveal the chronic and endemic diseases of the time, as well as give indications of their causes and their course of development. "These studies are of great scientific interest," said Kamel. "They will hopefully enable researchers to learn the history of some major diseases in Egypt like bilharzia (schistosomiasis) and even precautions to help eradicate them."

These studies will be carried out on samples taken from bones and tissues of the remains in the workers' cemetery. Special facilities on the plateau will ensure that the necessary samples can be taken without damaging the remains, as well as their safe transportation to the laboratory for analyses according to the latest technology. Additionally, a network system will be installed to link the researchers working in the field with efforts being exerted in the laboratories.

The NIH is financing the project, said Kamel, who also explained that the collaboration of the Ministry of Agriculture may be requested in order to help in the research. "One of the main targets of the project is to create a genetic map for the Egyptian population," said Kamel. According to Zahi Hawass, director of antiquities of the Giza Plateau, the first examination of bones revealed that the average age of death for the workers and artisans, who represented 80 per cent of the Egyptian population, ranged between 30 and 35 years. The main cause of death was bilharzia, "which affected Ancient Egyptians just as much as today's farmers."

Hawass went on to explain that "the examination of one of the skeletal remains disclosed the first evidence of cancer while some of the corpses had bandages around their arms and legs." Hawass said studies have already revealed that medicine was not advanced during the age of the Giza pyramid-builders. "A great number of Egyptian women died in childbirth and the proportion of mortality of women compared to men was 4:1."

Continued excavation of the workers' village has resulted in the discovery of the remains of a building that may have served for emergency treatment. In a nearby service area, a large bakery was found with fragments of the vats used for mixing dough and moulds for baking bread. The concomitant of a bakery in Ancient Egypt was a beer production unit because the beer was made from fermented bread and this, too, has been found. "The workers laboured to construct mighty monuments for their king, were well-fed and found time to build and decorate their tombs, inscribing them with a wealth of information about their lives and working conditions," said Hawass. The titles given to the owners of 43 tombs, also built in a pyramidal shape, clearly indicate that the workers were Egyptian. The tombs were inscribed with prayers for their owners' eternal protection and warnings to potential grave robbers. One of them reads: "Attention all, anyone who enters this tomb or does harm to it, the priest of Hathor will strike him twice. The gods will confront him. The crocodile, hippopotamus and lion will destroy him."

As excavations and research continue, plans to rid the Giza Plateau of encumbrances are going ahead. Hawass confirmed that the government recently approved a plan to develop the plateau south of the archaeologically-protected area. This way, tourist buses, cars and camels, horses and donkeys, not to mention traders, will be kept at a safe distance. A 10-kilometre ring road will be built around the plateau, providing parking facilities, a cultural and recreational centre and a new stable. "Although camel rides are among the pleasures to be enjoyed on the Giza Plateau, the pyramid area is not a picnic area, but an archaeological site of great historical importance which deserves to be treated with respect," said Hawass.

Under the plan, the new stable will be built some two kilometres south of the smallest of the three Pyramids of Giza, that of Menkaure, and will be equipped with a veterinary clinic. It will serve as a base for cameleers and donkey drivers after being completed within two months.

AMONG the workers on the great pyramids was a carpenter called Inty-Shedu, who worked all his life at the Giza plateau and depicted himself four times at different stages of his career. The second one was a hard-working baker who is seen kneading the dough

Site tours

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36.

Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32.

Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai
Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min, from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company
Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qusseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.
Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.
Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Egyptian tourism on the Internet

Here are some useful addresses on the Internet, including tourism magazines, archaeology and travel agency programmes:

http://www idsc.gov.eg/links.htm is an address through which you can access other useful tourism addresses on the Internet. Here they are:

http://www.idsc.gov.eg/tourism is the address of Egypt's Tourism Net which provides directories of Egypt's hotels, restaurants, cruise lines, travel agents, transportation companies and tourist attractions.
Egypt's tourism net is a part of many home pages (culture, health, environment, etc) created by the IDSC as a part of the nation's Information Highway.

http://163.121.10.41/tourism is the key to Egypt Has it All, where Egypt's tourist sites, such as the Red Sea, Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, the Sinai, Alexandria, oases and ETA offices abroad are described. The magazine also contains colour photographs of Egypt.
http://www.memphis.edu/egypt/egypt.htm is the address of the University of Memphis, and describes their projects in Egypt.

http://www-ceg.ceg.vivc.edu/~haggag/travel.html is the address of Egypt's Tours and Travel, which organises packages for people who want to take quality tours. It is an Egyptian tour operator, which specialises in tours within Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East.

http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7210 is the address of The Curse of the Pharaohs. It includes photographs of ancient tombs and temples.

http://www.ezy.be/horses is the address of The Arabian Horse Worldwide Guide. This guide aims to promote the world's most beautiful and versatile horse — the Arabian.

http://intercoz.com/egypt is a 2,000-page magazine, published by the Ministry of Tourism, where all Egyptian tourist sites are listed and described.

http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~aoa5u/city is the address of the magazine *Cairo Scene*, Cairo's first on-line art and entertainment guide. It is the most up-to-date source on where to go and what to do in Cairo. It has also sections for books and the latest CD's besides proposed places to visit like Wadi Rayyan.

http://watt.seas.virginia.EDU/~aoa5u is the site of Exodus Egypt, a daily site covering home news including political, social and cultural events.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**

Cultivating the Spanish market

Travel writers from Catalonia, Spain, chose Egypt to hold their annual meeting. **Rehab Saad** attended a conference held by the Ministry of Tourism to welcome them

The participation of Egypt in Fitur, the tourist exhibition held in Spain from 29 January to 1 February, drew attention to Egypt's conference facilities and other attractions. Consequently, four big conferences have been scheduled in the country, one of them the annual meeting of the travel writers of Catalonia. About 100 participants visited Cairo, Giza, Fayoum, Luxor and Aswan from 28 April to 6 May, and their writings are expected to cast additional light on these major tourist destinations for the benefit of Spaniards.

The Ministry of Tourism started targeting the Spanish market this year when it was realised that the number of visitors from Spain was below the number of tourists coming from other countries to Egypt. Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagui, therefore, decided to call 1997 "the year of Spain" and to devote more effort to attract the Spanish market.

According to tourism officials, touristic cooperation between the two countries is long-standing. "An agreement was signed between Egypt and Spain in Madrid for bilateral tourist cooperation in 1975. Then, an executive protocol for that agreement was signed in 1984. This is still in effect," explained Beltagui. He added that the attention given to the Spanish market was exemplified by the Egyptian participation in the Fitur market in Madrid. "Moreover, Egypt was honoured by the visit of the king and queen of Spain last February during which time King Juan Carlos attended a meeting between Spanish and Egyptian businessmen to discuss bilateral cooperation," he said.

The movement of visitors from Spain to Egypt in 1996 was 27,489 which represents an increase of 17 per cent over 1995. Statistics for the period January-March 1997 show that their number jumped by 46 per cent compared to the same period in 1996.

The current promotional plans include familiarisation trips for influential tourist and media figures as well as advertisements in the Spanish media at a cost of $150,000 "for a start."

In a press conference held by the minister of tourism, the concerns of the Spanish travel writers were addressed. One of them broached the topic of religious tourism, especially to Old Testament sites. Beltagui responded that steps are already being taken to upgrade these as tourist destinations. Someone else asked which sites in Egypt receive the largest influx of tourists. Beltagui answered that Sinai and the Red Sea hold first place and that more people are now going to these areas than to traditional historical sites. "However, we are trying to turn Egypt into a year-round destination," he added. "Travel agents are endeavouring to link both monuments and recreational resorts in one programme lasting for about two weeks," he said.

Beltagui stressed that steps are being taken to build two-star or three-star hotels "so that young people from various countries around the world can afford to visit Egypt. We will be trying also to encourage university students, especially from Spain, to come to Egypt. Our office in Madrid will be organising these trips," he concluded.







Cultivating the Spanish market

Travel writers from Catalonia, Spain, chose Egypt to hold their annual meeting. Rehab Saad attended a conference held by the Ministry of Tourism to welcome them



Mohamed Ali, the under-17 soccer team technical manager, held on their shoulders celebrating victory

Stars are born

Egypt's under-17 football team defied expectations to win the Junior African Nations Cup last week, reports **Abeer Anwar**

Egypt's under-17s proved themselves worthy of their nickname, the 'Team of Hope' last week. For 11 years, the African Nations Cup titles — both junior and senior — had eluded Egypt. But with their victory in Botswana last week, the juniors put Egypt back on the African football map.

It was a memorable and totally unexpected victory. Soccer fans and officials alike were unable to believe that such a young and inexperienced team could achieve so much in so little time. Not only was this their first African Nations Cup victory, it was also their first major championship finals. Nevertheless, the youngsters were able not only to win but to thoroughly entertain and impress the 40,000 spectators at the Botswana national stadium.

The Botswana trip was no holiday for the team. Matches were played in the afternoon, and in the morning the players had to sit for the dreaded *thanaweya amma* exams.

The team, known to many Africans as the Young Pharaohs, began their climb to victory with a 1-0 win over Ethiopia in the semifinals, a win secured by Mohamed Khairy's goal in the 19th minute of the second half. Ghana was later able to beat Ethiopia 1-0 in the third-place play-off, thus booking themselves a place in the Under-17 World Cup taking place next September in Cairo.

For the final, Egypt was pitched against Mali. On first sight, the Malians looked like the natural winners. In addition to being well-built and tall, the team included two professionals currently playing for France. But this occasion proved the old adage that appearances aren't everything. Ashraf Abu Zeid scored for Egypt in the third minute of the first half. The Malians tensed up and tightened their play. Taking control of the match for the first time, they managed to put Egypt on the defensive. But Ahmed Ikrami, Egypt's goalkeeper, succeeded in keeping the ball out of his net. At the end of the match the score was 1-0 to the Egyptians, and the under-17s African Nations Cup was theirs. The Young Pharaohs had turned 11 years of loss into victory. The win was celebrated into the night in both Botswana and Cairo and the team received a congratulatory telegram from President Hosni Mubarak.

Fans, players, and even technical manager Mohamed Ali seemed to find it hard to believe. "The team did their best and they astonished us with their strong will and enthusiasm," commented Ali after the game. "They gave this amazing performance despite the fact that I'd repeatly told them to be calm and relax to give them the best chance in their exams. We didn't have to worry about qualifying for the World Cup because as the host country we are automatically allowed to take part. But the players just insisted on winning."

Samir Zaher, head of the Egyptian Football Federation (EFF) was also full of praise. The team, he said, had played like grown men and deserved their trophy. "The victory also proves that our current national team coach is better able to lead our players to victory than a foreign coach," he added.

The young heroes were given each a LE7,000 bonus — a figure upped from the planned LE4,000 by the EFF to reward the players for winning all their matches and not letting in a single goal. This lineup, Zaher explained, will be the nucleus of the national team for the next 10 years — Egypt's hope for the Youth World Cup in 1999, the Sydney Olympics in 2004 and the World Cup in 2006.



Havelange, FIFA president, attended the draw of the 4th under-17 FIFA World Championship *photo: Khaled El-Fiqi*

Of pharaohs and FIFA

With the draw for the groupings now completed, it's T-minus 101 days until the 4th under-17 FIFA/JVC Cup Championship kicks off in Egypt, writes **Abeer Anwar**

Before a capacity crowd that included numerous professional Egyptian footballers, actors and actresses, FIFA and Egyptian sports officials, the draw for the 4th under-17 FIFA World Championship was held this week for the first time in Egypt.

Egypt had won this coveted bid last May following a heated battle with New Zealand to host this competition. Egyptian sports officials, however, are convinced that the FIFA/JVC Cup competition, which will be held next September, is but the first of many such events to which Egypt will play host.

"This event is a starting block from which Egypt will organise other such championships," said Abdel-Moneim Emara, executive president of the Egyptian Council for Youth and Sports. "This is a test for us, and if we succeed, we will seek to organise the senior's World Cup next time."

Egyptian officials and sportsmen, however, were not alone in expressing their confidence that Egypt could successfully host such a competition. FIFA's president, Jaoa Havelange, after visiting the sites where the matches will be held in Egypt, said: "FIFA fully expects that the 1997 event in Egypt be as good as its predecessors." The tournament will be broadcast to an estimated 450 million viewers in more than 70 countries. This figure is a drastic increase over those from 1991, where it was aired to only 44 countries, and means that Egyptian sports event organisers are sure to have countless eyes looking on as they pull this competition together.

Havelange also predicted that given "the Egyptian team's strong performance in the African Nations Cup," it could secure, if not first place, then at least one of the top four slots. In either case, said Havelange, "it is appropriate that this tournament will take place, for the first time, in Africa."

Preparations for the tournament, which is set to begin on 4 September and end on the 21st of that month, are well under way. The various matches will be held in five different stadiums, two of which are in Cairo. Cairo Stadium, which has a seating capacity of nearly 76,000 will witness three matches while that of the Cairo Military Academy, which seats 40,000, will host seven matches. The other three match venues will be in Port Said Stadium (seven matches), Alexandria Stadium (seven matches) and Ismailia Stadium (eight matches).

Participating in this international event will be 16 teams, representing all six football federations. The teams will be broken down into four groups of four, with the top two from each group moving into the quarter-finals. But selecting these 16 teams was no easy matter. An unprecedented 80 teams competed for one of the 16 spots.

The draw for the grouping, which was preceded by a folkloric show and a short movie narrated by veteran Egyptian thespians, Omar Sherif and Youssra, was carried out by Joseph Blatter, FIFA's executive secretary, with the help of some professional Egyptian footballers, such as Hassan Shehata, Ali Abu Gresha and Helmi Tolan.

As a departure from the past, this year FIFA decided before the draw began not to allow two teams from the same continent to play in the same group. For Egypt, this was a stroke of luck. Already facing a threat from fellow Group A competitor, Chile, Egypt managed to avoid compounding the matter as Brazil was placed in Group C.

Competing with Egypt and Chile in Group A will be Thailand and Germany, and the matches between these countries will be played in the Cairo Military Academy's Stadium. In Group B, New Zealand, Mali, Mexico and Spain will test their skills against each other in what is expected to prove to be the toughest group matches. Spain, which has previously won the European Cup, shares the distinction of being one of the world's best teams with Mexico. Group C competition will witness a battle between Oman, the US, Austria and Brazil, while Group D includes Argentina, Ghana, Costa Rica and Bahrain.

Ghana, which has twice previously won this competition — the first time being in 1991 and then in 1995 — could be a strong contender for the title this year. But Egypt's sights have been narrowed to the potential threat it faces from Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Germany and Oman. Its opening match against Thailand is expected to be an easy contest for Egypt.

To inject a little Egyptian flavour into the tournament, the organising committee, headed by Osama Khalil, has selected a logo entitled, TUT FOOT. The name of the logo is drawn from that of the Pharaonic king, Tutankhamun, who died at the age of 17.

Countdown to the final round

The preliminary rounds of the World Handball Championships finished on Sunday and the top four teams from each group — including Egypt — advanced into the tournament's final stage. **Inas Mazhar** reports from Kumamoto

After 60 preliminary matches to decide the best four teams in each of the four groups, the top 16 handball teams in the world went through to the final stage of the World Handball Championships, which began last Tuesday. The world championship final will be played at Kumamoto's Park Dome on Sunday.

In Group A, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Lithuania and hosts Japan qualified, leaving Algeria and Saudi Arabia out of the running. Ireland played well in the preliminaries, winning four of its five matches, and only being held to a draw by the Algerians, who looked good at the beginning of the competition, but who later faltered, giving up their place in the final 16 to the Japanese, who beat them 24-14.

Perhaps the event's biggest upset so far came in Group B, with the defeat of France, the defending champions, by Korea 27-26. Korea came from behind to erase a seven-goal difference at the end of the first half. France had considered Sweden, another of the world's top teams, as their main rivals in the group, but they managed to beat them by just one point to qualify for the next round alongside Sweden, China and Norway. Championship first-timers Italy and the inexperienced Argentina were left behind.

The Egyptian team played in Group C together with Spain, the Czech Republic, Tunisia, Portugal and Brazil. Egypt qualified second in the group, behind Spain. Both countries finished the preliminary round with nine points, but Spain nudged into the top position on goal difference. Spain and Egypt each won four of their five matches, but drew 19-19 in their match against each other.

In the preliminary round, Egypt scored a total of 129 goals, 24 by the team's top scorer Ashraf Awad. Egypt beat the Czech Republic 24-22, drew with Spain 19-19, then defeated Tunisia 24-17, outlasted Brazil 33-11 and finally defeated Portugal, who were making their first World Championship appearance, 29-25.

The Czech Republic qualified in third place behind Egypt, while Tunisia became the second Arab nation to qualify by coming fourth in the group. Portugal, which won only one match, and Brazil, which lost all its five matches, had to say an early good-bye to the championship.

Olympic gold medalists Croatia caused another major surprise in Group D. After beginning in their usual solid fashion, beating China and Morocco, they then lost unexpectedly to Hungary and only managed a draw with Cuba. These two bad results put the Olympic champions in fourth place, qualifying by a whisker. In this group, Russia proved itself unbeatable and qualified in top place. The Hungarians, full of confidence after their Croatia clash, won all their matches except the one against Russia and took second place, with Cuba inching into third place ahead of Croatia on goal difference. China and Morocco were eliminated.

The eight eliminated teams were given places from 17 to 24 according to goal difference. Their order from 17 downwards runs: Algeria, Italy, Portugal, China, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Morocco and Brazil.





Rageh Daoud and Mona Ghoneim:

Thunder from paradise

Two sweet birds shun the noise of folly

Ask about words, perishables, intangibles and improbables. Sing them or speak them. If you'd rather, ignore them. Like words, people are floaters, mostly — plankton on the tide, or drowning in currents of the deep. Music, of course, drowns people. "Oh I do, I do. Really I do" — and down they go, under waves of sound. And buildings mostly go down in earthquakes. Questions without answers. And profiles, the Daoud couple ask. They mostly exist, the Daouds, like other composers.

And so to music we have come. Better to ask the Daoud couple again about music. They swim in it and know that, like water, it merely appears to exist. Music is of the spheres, lighter than space. The Daouds exist. Music does not. As they say, put your hands where notes are. There is nothing. Intangible, improbable and fun. You can laugh with the music of Rossini, a sweet, fat old gentleman, who burst from over-eating; but his music hovers forever over the Mediterranean Sea.

The Daoud couple, Rageh and Mona, are almost the same age — both born in Cairo, he in 1954, she 1955. Mona Ghoneim, aged eight, joined the then new Conservatoire of Music to study the piano, he followed to the Conservatoire at nine to study the same instrument. And so from there their lives seemed to go on, a duet of mutual moves in the same direction. They both studied the piano with Ettore Puglisi, the then great teacher. Both began musical composition with the Egyptian composer Gamal Abdel-Rehim. Under him, they worked on traditional Arabic music, as well as undertaking important work on theory of contemporary musical composition. Abdel-Rehim was a remarkable composer, performer and pedagogue. He had a profound influence on the two students.

The beginnings of musical life have their problems. But both the Daouds talk with affection and respect of Abdel-Rehim's gifts of imparting the almost impossible practice of musical composition. It can be comprehended, but not forced or manipulated into unsuitable areas, or the student is lost. They were aided by the understanding in all things musical by Samha El-Kholi, Abdel-Rehim's wife. She was active, as always, in fighting for the young and doing the best possible for her flock. This period of music in Cairo, the time of the youth of Mona Ghoneim and Rageh Daoud, was extremely fertile in instrumental music as well as ballet and opera.

Apart from any political upheaval, this world went down in ashes when the old Opera House burned. The Conservatoire became a dependable pivot. The Daouds benefited as well as most musicians. It used to be and still is fashionable to say rough things of the Conservatoire, most of which are exaggerated. At least nearly all the musicians around today passed through its doors, wherever their careers finally took them. Conservatoires, like opera houses, are safe targets for stone-throwers, because the institutions cannot, on principle, retaliate. Like the new Opera House, these places are better to have, whatever their drawbacks, than not to have at all. In 1978 the Daoud couple both obtained high honours in their diplomas for musical composition and entered the Cairo Conservatoire as assistant professors.

Back in 1974, these two had fallen in love very traditionally and by 1980 were married. In 1981, they went to Vienna, having obtained post-graduate diplomas to study at the Vienna Music Academy with Professor Christian David, later to become musical director at the new Cairo Opera. In 1984 the Daouds' son was born. In 1988 both father and mother received the Magister Artium from the Vienna Music Academy. At the end of 1988 both returned to Cairo to resume their teaching positions at the Conservatoire, which they still hold to this day. That year, however, saw the Daouds not at a cross-roads but on no road at all.

They were distinguished professors. They had earned their rights to honours at one of the great seats of musical learning. But here, in 1988, they were back in Cairo, and here they still are. Nothing can come of nothing but everything matters, said the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu. The Daouds occupy a position of great respect. They are very fine givers of the lessons of the philosophy of music to a wide range of pupils. Their professional duties take up all their time, yet both of them are trained composers who compose but little. This is a frustration hard to endure in creative people. During the past nine years their composition had dwindled as their importance as teachers has risen. So they have fallen in line along with a queue of people who in Cairo's musical life exist as what could be called serious musical composers, as opposed to pop or cross-over music. There are Abdel-Wahab, Shawan and Khairat, who have managed to write their particular type of music, which has gained them much public acclaim as well as some economic benefits. But even these popular composers receive minute monthly payment for their services. For composers like the Daouds, financial recompense is nil. There is no lawful system in Egypt of payment by royalty, no publicity for their works to be performed and no publishing house for their compositions.

For Rageh Daoud to write an opera or a long work of any sort, he must have the money to cover his work time. This does not exist. Such music is not sponsored in Cairo. The composers themselves have no way to make themselves public as painters do through galleries. The law says the opera must perform one work a year from a local composer. It does this but neither the opera nor the composer receives any financial benefit at all. And music in any form in Cairo is not chic or supported by the moneyed class of society as painting is. Painters can live by their work. For serious music there is nothing.

Both Rageh and Mona Daoud write music; sometimes, after years, it receives a performance, as was the case with both composers recently. Each had two strongly composed, complex and modern works in the Viennese tradition, completely professional and exciting, performed at the Opera House, Main Hall, with no reward at all. And in the case of Rageh Daoud, this composition was written about seven years ago. Curious, but with serious music, the cinema comes to the rescue. For a film score, it pays outright and during the last years, Daoud has written over twenty film scores. The payment is small, and Arab countries pay nothing, but it is the only source of extra income they receive. The spoken theatre is a labour of love, nothing more. For the film *Kit Kat*, shown for five days in a French cinema, the payment was LE500. Films with Daoud's music have been shown abroad at festivals. Films like *The Shepherd and the Women* and *Land of Dreams* have gone to Europe, but there seems no way for Daoud of obtaining copyright or royalty on any of them. So it is always back — to the Conservatoire, and the drawing board.

For Mona Ghoneim, it is the same story. A few pieces are played at the Opera Main Hall and the Hanager, but as financial benefits, they are hardly on the red line. She has made some fine music for documentaries. She laughs when she says she gets one film shown every two years. One, *Sunset Fishing*, and another, *Fly Kite* (about young girls' sensual and moral problems), did well with large audiences, but the gains were nominal.

What is there to do? No comment from the Daoud couple. They are acclimatised. Rageh says quite merrily: "The authorities treat us composers as bus conductors." Maybe the future will change. Oil riches, new lands developed and tourist mass influx — will any of this help the composers of good Egyptian music? There is much talent and the millions roaming the streets. Can any of them be brought in to hear an opera by an Egyptian composer of quality?

The acoustical garbage storm blows past; musical gestalt-structuring can turn Cairo street noise into the sounds of paradise since every sound begins beautifully. Most of this metamorphosis is not heard by human ears. The Daouds talk of the ever-expanding sound. Music is changing. Who cares about sound waves turning beautiful or nasty? In all this chaos the two Daouds stand firm, they are not talkers. Prevailed upon, yes, but they say little and that must suffice. They seem to stand completely apart from the bash and bustle of Cairo life. They are a pair — for sure. They exude a great fondness for each other. She is rather small, he is tall. She is quiet as a dove, no trace of the fierce wife about her, proud without any pretences. He has macho power but makes no bother about it. He, too, is so untalkative as to be disquieting. Both are viewers, not talkers, not quotable, very visual but certainly not bores. They give an impression of strength. Power radiates from both. And they know the music scene worldwide. They really are to love. And are they Romeo and Juliet? For sure not. She is definitely Mona Ghoneim and he is Rageh Daoud. Together, like a Swiss watch, very firmly closed against the erosions of time and the world.

Adornment, what a science. Modesty, what elegance. Music, what a weapon.

High in the sky flies the nightingale whose voice unites earth to spirit and, like the couple in R. Strauss's song *Im Adendrot*, as its voice soars above them, hand in hand they go through life, united by its music.

Postscript: at last week's National Film Festival both Rageh Daoud and Mona Ghoneim won awards, he for best film score, she a certificate of merit.

*Profile by **David Blake***

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

◆ I may say at once that I am very fond of the oil paintings of Mexico's Ambassador to Egypt Hector Cardenas. Spontaneity in a thick coat of style — that's how I saw them. Ambassador Cardenas obviously has an eye for light, and lots of it. But there were shadows within.

Cardenas came to Cairo in 1995, and it is in Cairo that he decided to go public with his paintings. This is his first exhibition, and I am determined to go again to the Hanager gallery in the Opera House. Cardenas has the sweetest smile. And, no, he will not be dragged into discussions about the notorious corruption of Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party the *Partido Revolucionario Institutional* or the Zapatista insurgency in the impoverished southern and mainly indigenous native American province of Chiapas.

Cardenas has a splendid and colourful villa in Mexico City and a *lavishly painted country* house too. His own residence in Maadi is tastefully outlandish. The ochre yellow and brilliant blue façade hides an interior of brightly coloured rooms — primrose, lemon *green*, *shocking pink*, baby blue and orange. Of course, his paintings grace the multi-coloured walls.

The paintings reflect an exuberance and an abundance of creative energy that betrays the artists' *immense* Latin gusto. Portraits of handsome young men predominate, but there is a sprinkling of very striking women: his mother, his wife, his daughter. My favourite is that of his mother, who appears to be just about the only woman painted who has two full breasts. All others, no matter how pretty the face, and eyes, sadly have a single breast.



(l - r) Bahaa Taher, Ibrahim Aslan, Gamal El-Ghitani, Samir Farag and Salah Fadl

♥ As you see dears I am into new endeavours, 'intellectual" as some of my friends are fond of qualifying these activities. Having revitalised my artistic tendencies I proceeded to awaken my literary gifts by attending quite an interesting award ceremony during which 20 prizes were given to the best stories written this year on the October War. So exciting dears to see all this military/Literary talent on display at the Armoured Forces Club where **Samir Farag**, director of the Armed Forces Welfare and Recreation Department and chairman of *Al-Nasr* magazine, announced the awards while I chatted with my good friend playwright **Saadeddin Wahba**, novelist **Gamal El-Ghitani**, *Al-Ahram's* historian **Yunan Labib Rizk** and former minister of culture, **Ahmed Heikal**. And dears you should have seen the jury who had to select the winners from among 3000 entries! **Gamal** was on the jury of course and so were writers **Bahaa Taher** and **Ibrahim Aslan**, literary critic **Salah Fadl** and **Tarek El-Hariri** the editor-in-chief of *El-Nasr* magazine. The lucky winner was Port Saidian **Qassem Saad Elewa** and I heard **Hussein Mahran**, chairman of the general organisation of Culture Palaces say that the award-winning novel may well be used for a serial on TV. I can't wait to watch it.

♣ Well dears I am sure that you have been reading all about the fuss made of **Youssef Chahine** these days, what with his new film and the Cannes award. Actually, if you need a quick update just glance at our front page. Last Monday dears, as I was beginning to tell you, something quite extraordinary happened. **Youssef Chahine** received the Journalists' Syndicate's award extended to him by the Syndicate's chairman, **Ibrahim Nafie**, in the name of 5000 journalists. Nafie said that he had known **Chahine** for a long time and had always believed in his talent as a film director. The ceremony was really moving because it is the very first time that such an award is given to anyone at all by the Journalists Syndicate. One more first for dear **Youssef** who, after the hugging and back thumping was over, expressed in a much applauded speech his appreciation of the journalists' attitude during the times when he and his films had been under attack.

